



Breast Pain

What causes breast pain?

Nearly 70% of women experience breast pain at some point in their lives. Breast pain may occur in one or both breasts or in the underarm (axilla) region of the body. *Though breast pain is not normally associated with breast cancer, women who experience any breast abnormalities, including breast pain, should consult their physician.*

The majority of breast pain relates to how the breast tissue responds to monthly changes in a woman's menstrual cycle. Breast tissue swells because increased estrogen and progesterone hormone levels cause the breast's milk glands and ducts to enlarge, and in turn, the breasts retain water. The breasts may feel swollen, painful, tender, or lumpy a few days before menstruation. Cyclical breast pain may last for several years but usually stops after menopause.

Other factors that may contribute to breast pain in some women include: oral contraceptive pills, hormone replacement therapy, stress, chest wall muscle strains, bone pain, weight gain, bras that do not fit properly, and breast inflammation or cysts.

Breast pain treatment – works in up to 85% of patients!

- **Evening primrose oil** – as directed
- **Take vitamins** – some women have found taking Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine), Vitamin B1 (thiamine), and Vitamin E relieves breast pain (Vitamin E – 800-1000 IU daily)
- **Fish oil** – as directed
- **Soy**
- **Wear a professionally-fitted, supportive bra** – to reduce breast movement
- **Wear a soft sports bra while sleeping** – reduces muscle strain from the breast pulling on the chest wall
- **Occasionally use over-the-counter ibuprofen** (Motrin, Advil) – If you have predictable, cyclical breast pain related to your menstrual cycle, take ibuprofen 400mg every 6 hours, 3 times a day for 3 days, starting 2 days before your period should begin
- **Limit sodium intake** – it can cause water retention in breast tissue
- **Reduce caffeine intake** (coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate)
- **Maintain a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains**
- **Maintain an ideal weight** – losing excess weight reduces breast pain by stabilizing hormone levels. Exercise!
- **Relax** – breast pain may subside by reducing anxiety and tension – consider acupuncture
- **Cyst aspiration** of large or tender fluid-filled cysts (a benign condition)

