

What are benign breast conditions?

Benign breast conditions (also known as benign breast diseases) are noncancerous disorders that affect the breast. Your doctor may use the term “fibrocystic change” to describe a range of benign breast conditions.

Some benign breast conditions can cause discomfort or pain and may need treatment. Others need no treatment. Some benign breast conditions mimic breast cancer and tests are needed to make a diagnosis.



Warning signs of breast cancer

See a doctor if you notice any of these changes:

- Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area
- Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- Pulling in of the nipple or other parts of the breast
- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- New pain in one spot that does not go away

Breast lumps or lumpiness

Many women find that their breasts feel lumpy. Breast tissue naturally has a bumpy texture. For some women, the lumpiness is more obvious than for others. In most cases, there is no cause to worry.

If the lumpiness can be felt throughout the breast and feels like your other breast, it is probably normal breast tissue. Lumps that feel harder or different from the rest of the breast (or the other breast) or that feel like a change are a concern. When this type of lump is found, it may be a sign of a benign breast condition or breast cancer.

If you find a lump in your breast, don't panic. Most lumps are not breast cancer.

Some lumps will go away on their own. You may notice them before your monthly period, but they go away by the end of your cycle. You may also notice lumps if you take menopausal hormones.

If you find a new lump or change, it is best to see a doctor. Even if you have had a benign lump in the past, don't assume a new lump will be the same. The lump may not be breast cancer, but it is best to get it checked.

Do benign breast conditions increase the risk of breast cancer?

Although benign breast conditions are not breast cancer, some types can increase the risk of breast cancer.

Benign breast conditions

Benign breast conditions differ from each other in how the cells look under a microscope. For example, hyperplasia cells look different from fibroadenoma cells. These conditions can also differ in how they look or feel to you or your doctor. If you are told you have a benign breast condition find out which type you have.

Benign breast condition	Increases risk of breast cancer?	Other information
Hyperplasia (usual or atypical) — an overgrowth of cells, most often on the inside of the lobules or ducts in the breast	Yes	More screening and risk reduction options may be recommended.
Cyst — a fluid-filled sac that feels like a lump or a tender spot	No	Common in premenopausal women Often does not need to be removed (unless painful)
Fibroadenoma — a smooth, rubbery or hard lump that moves easily within the breast tissue	No	Most common in women ages 15-35 Often does not need to be removed (unless painful)
Intraductal papillomas — small growths that occur in the ducts of the breasts and can cause nipple discharge	No (unless they have abnormal cells or there is ductal carcinoma in situ in the surrounding tissue)	Most common in women ages 35-55 Removed with surgery
Sclerosing adenosis — small breast lumps caused by enlarged lobules that may be painful	Unclear	Does not need treatment
Radial scar (also called complex sclerosing lesions) — a core of connective tissue fibers	Unclear	Removed with surgery

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