Benign Breast Conditions

What are benign breast conditions?

Benign breast conditions (also known as benign breast diseases) are noncancerous disorders that can 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.

Breast lumps or lumpiness

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 the cycle. You may also notice lumps if you use menopausal hormones.

Many women may 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 breast cancer or a benign breast condition.

Warning signs of breast cancer

See your 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

Can benign breast conditions increase the risk of breast cancer?

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

For more information, visit www.komen.org or call Susan G. Komen’s breast care helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 10 PM ET.
Benign breast conditions

Benign breast conditions differ from each other in how the cells look under a microscope and how they present clinically. For example, atypical hyperplasia looks different from fibroadenoma cells. If you are diagnosed with a benign breast condition (or are told you have a fibrocystic change) find out which type you have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benign breast condition</th>
<th>Increases risk of breast cancer?</th>
<th>Other information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyperplasia (usual or atypical) — an overgrowth of cells, most often on the inside of the lobules or ducts in the breast</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Women with atypical hyperplasia may consider options to lower breast cancer risk</td>
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<td>Cyst — a fluid-filled sac that feels like a lump or a tender spot</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>More common in premenopausal women. Often do not need to be removed (unless painful)</td>
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<td>Fibroadenoma — a smooth, rubbery or hard lump that moves easily within the breast tissue</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Most common in women ages 15 to 35. Often do not need to be removed (unless painful)</td>
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<td>Intraductal papillomas — small growths that occur in the ducts of the breasts and can cause nipple discharge</td>
<td>No (unless they have abnormal cells or there is ductal carcinoma in situ in the surrounding tissue)</td>
<td>Most common in women ages 35 to 55. Removed with surgery</td>
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<td>Sclerosing adenosis — small breast lumps caused by enlarged lobules that may be painful</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Does not need treatment</td>
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<td>Radial scar (also called complex sclerosing lesions) — a core of connective tissue fibers</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Removed with surgery</td>
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Related fact sheets in this series:
- Biopsy
- Breast Cancer Detection
- Imaging Methods Used to Find Breast Cancer
- Mammography
- When You Discover a Lump or Change

Resource

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www.komen.org