



Breast cysts

Breast cysts are common, particularly in women ages 40 to 60. Cysts are fluid-filled sacs within the breast. These sacs form when normal milk glands enlarge. Most often, multiple breast cysts occur, and they can vary in size from microscopic to larger than a pingpong ball.

Diagnosing breast cysts

Although larger cysts can sometimes be felt as lumps, you may not feel smaller ones at all. Cysts are often seen as a mass on mammograms. If this occurs, it is likely you will have a breast ultrasound, which can diagnose cysts accurately more than 95% of the time.

Breast cysts and cancer risk

Almost all simple breast cysts are not cancerous. About 1 in 1,000 cysts contain a tumor, but not all of these tumors are cancerous. Most women with cysts are not at a greater risk for breast cancer. However, your risk may be minimally elevated if there is a family history of breast cancer involving your mother, sister or daughter.

Cyst aspiration

If you have a breast lump, your doctor may recommend extracting the fluid from the cyst, which is called aspiration. This procedure helps confirm it is a cyst, and the fluid removal often causes the lump to disappear. If the material that is aspirated isn't fluid, the radiologist may recommend additional tissue sampling (biopsy) of the area of concern. The material will be sent to a lab for testing.

When a cyst is discovered by ultrasound, aspiration generally isn't needed unless the cyst has some unusual features, is causing discomfort or appears to contain material other than fluid.

What to expect if you have an aspiration:

- ▲ The cyst is located by ultrasound.
- ▲ The skin is cleaned with an antibacterial solution.
- ▲ A small needle is inserted into the cyst. The fluid is then drained until the cyst disappears.
- ▲ When the needle is removed, a small bandage is applied.





Monitoring breast cysts

Breast cysts often change in size, or they may entirely disappear between annual exams. Both are commonly seen on annual mammograms. Since your mammogram may look different each year when you have cysts, you may also have an ultrasound. Diagnostic, rather than screening, mammograms are often recommended.

Fibrocystic disease

Fibrocystic disease is a term used to describe a lumpy breast. This is a common benign condition, not a disease, and is usually not related to breast cysts. Half of all women have a fibrocystic condition, which causes irregular-feeling breast tissue, cyclical pain and tenderness. These symptoms result from cyclical changes in normal female hormones.

Ready to care for you

If you have a breast health condition, our team offers complete care that's tailored to fit your needs. No matter the diagnosis, we're ready to help you get back to Better.



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