

- Wear a soft support bra for sleeping.
- Simple pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help with breast pain. Take these medicines following the instructions on the packet.
- See your GP to talk about other ways to manage breast pain.
- Keep a record of your breast pain for a couple of months to see if there is a pattern.
 - Mark the days when you experience pain.
 - If you are still menstruating, mark when your menstruation starts.
 - Record other details such as any changes in your diet and any stressful events.

This information will help your GP to understand what might be causing your breast pain.

Points to remember:

- Many people will experience breast pain during their lives.
- Breast pain alone is rarely a sign of breast cancer.
- If you are concerned about any breast pain, please talk to your GP.
- Your GP may perform a clinical breast examination and refer you for further tests such as a diagnostic mammogram and/or ultrasound of your breast.

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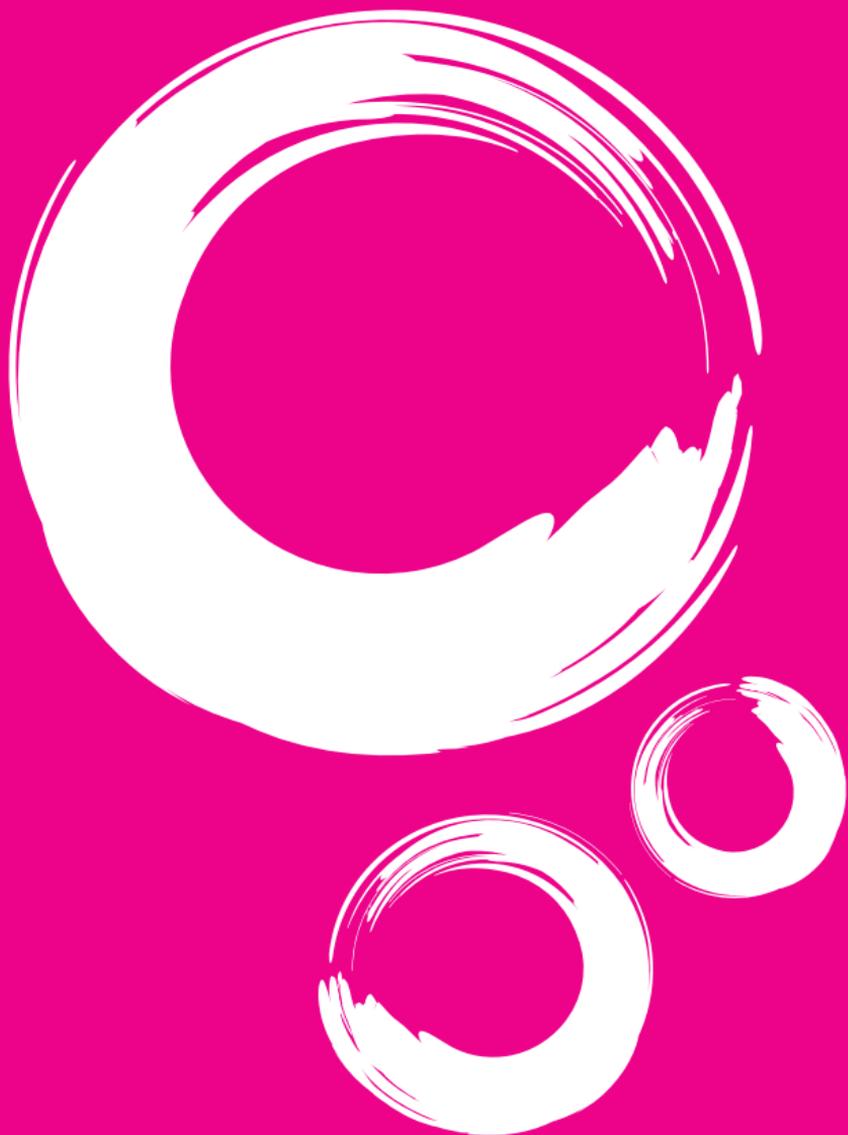
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 Publication No. Q014873

Breast Pain



BreastScreen ACT



13 20 50

Belconnen | Phillip | City

A program of



ACT
Government

BreastScreen
AUSTRALIA

A joint Australian, State and Territory Government Program

Breast pain is also known as mastalgia. Many people will experience breast pain during their lives. Breast pain alone is rarely a sign of breast cancer.

How common is breast pain?

- Many people will experience breast pain during their lives.
- We often think pain is a sign something is wrong and even serious, but this is rarely the case with breast pain.
- Breast pain can vary from mild to severe. Some people experience an ache, while others experience a stabbing or burning sensation.
- Breast pain alone is rarely a sign of breast cancer.

What are some of the causes of breast pain?

- Hormonal changes
- Injury to the breast
- Pregnancy
- Inflammation
- Weight gain
- Simple breast cysts
- Badly fitting bra
- Some forms of hormone replacement therapy
- Infection of the breast (mastitis)

Are there different types of breast pain?

Breast pain (known as mastalgia) can be divided into two types called cyclic and non-cyclic breast pain.

Cyclic breast pain

This is the most common type of breast pain and is linked to your menstrual cycle. The pain may be related to your breast tissue being more sensitive than usual because of changes in your hormone levels. The pain can be different in each breast.

Generally, the pain occurs 3-7 days prior to menstruation, although some people can experience tenderness starting in the middle of their cycle at the time of ovulation. This tenderness can continue for two weeks until menstruation starts.

If you notice a new breast symptom or change in your breasts you should discuss these with your GP.

Non-cyclic breast pain

Non-cyclical breast pain is not related to your menstrual cycle.

Often no cause can be found for this type of breast pain. In some cases, it can be caused by benign breast changes such as cysts, fibroadenomas, and age-related

changes in the milk ducts under the nipple. Non-cyclic breast pain:

- is often described as burning, drawing, achy and sore
- usually affects women in their 40s-50s
- can come and go
- tends to be one sided and in one section of the breast.

Breast pain can also be a side effect of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

Are there other types of pain that can be mistaken for breast pain?

Pain may be felt in the region of the breast but originates from somewhere else. This type of pain nearly always involves bones, joints or muscles and is called musculoskeletal pain.

- Pain in the chest wall or spine may cause discomfort in the breast.
- Arthritis or a pinched nerve in the neck may cause breast pain.
- Other forms of illness such as shingles, pneumonia or gall stones may cause breast pain.

If you notice a new breast symptom or any changes in your breasts you should discuss these with your GP.

Pain during screening mammography

Some people experience pain and/or discomfort during a mammogram. To get a clear picture and to minimise radiation exposure, the breast is positioned and compressed between two flat plates. This can be uncomfortable, but the compression only lasts a few seconds. You can stop the procedure at any time.

If your breasts become tender at certain times during your menstrual cycle, you may find it more comfortable to have a mammogram at a different time in your cycle.

Tips to relieve breast pain

Some suggestions that may relieve pain include:

- Choose a supportive bra that fits correctly to lessen the movement of your breasts on your chest wall. This is especially important if you have fuller breasts or participate in activities such as jogging or aerobics
- Visit a person trained in fitting bras to ensure you are wearing the correct size and type of bra. Bras with an under-wire can cause discomfort for some people.