



# Breast Pain



## How common is breast pain?

Breast pain is a common problem for women. Studies show that 60 - 70% of women have breast pain.

## What is breast pain?

Some women describe it as pain or tenderness in their breasts. It may or may not be a constant pain. It is often described as aching. Sometimes the pain is in the whole breast, both breasts or in just one area of the breast.

## What causes breast pain?

There is a lack of research on breast pain and experts do not agree on the cause. Your breast pain may be related to a variety of causes. If you have breast pain, it probably worries you.

## Is breast pain a symptom of cancer?

It is rare that breast pain is a symptom of cancer. If you have pain that is equal in both breasts it is most likely not cancer. If your breast pain is in one particular spot on your breast (target zone breast pain) you should see your doctor. New and constant pain in one breast that is getting worse instead of better may be a concern. Only 2 to 7% of women with "target-zone breast pain" have breast cancer.



## Is my breast pain related to my menstrual cycle?

It can be. Cyclic breast pain is the most common breast pain. It can be very painful 1 or 2 weeks before your period. It is likely to decrease after your period. Usually women with cyclic breast pain no longer have pain after menopause. Some women continue to have breast pain after menopause. 30% of women on hormone replacement therapy have breast tenderness.

## Does the size of my breasts affect my breast pain?

Women with large breasts have many symptoms due to the size of their breasts. These symptoms include neck and shoulder pain, back pain and breast pain.

## What should I do if I have breast pain?

It is helpful to find out what kind of breast pain you have (cyclical, occasional or target-zone pain). The best way to do this is to keep a breast pain chart. Use your calendar and keep track of your pain every day. Make note of where you feel the pain on your breast, if it is severe, mild or no pain at all. Also mark down the days of your period, if you still have one.



### Should I tell my doctor if I have breast pain?

Once you know more about the type of breast pain you have, you may want to discuss it with your doctor or health care provider. If you have pain that comes from a single spot you should have it checked by your doctor or health care provider. They may do a physical breast exam, mammogram, ultrasound or other tests. Ultrasound can be helpful to check this kind of pain because it can focus right on the area of pain or tenderness.

### What can I do to relieve my breast pain?

There are various treatments you may want to try. Some treatments haven't been studied, but they have helped many women. Prescription medications are available if you have severe breast pain. Discuss this with your doctor.

- Wear a bra that fits properly with extra support.
- Wear a sports bra during exercise and sleeping, especially when your breasts are most painful.
- Reduce or remove caffeine from your diet. Even though studies are not definite, many women have found it reduces the pain. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, chocolate and colas.
- Try relaxation therapy. Severe breast pain may be linked with high anxiety.
- Simple pain relievers such as aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen may help reduce breast pain.
- Maintain a low fat diet rich in vegetables, fruits and grains. Studies show a 20% reduction of fat in your diet can improve breast pain.
- Evening Primrose Oil appears to offer relief. Studies show it can improve breast pain by 20% to 30%.
- Try hot or cold compresses.
- Medical studies are not definite, but some women find Vitamin E helpful.



### Notes:



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