



Original Link: <http://women.webmd.com/guide/fibrocystic-breast-changes-symptoms-treatments-causes>

Fibrocystic Breast Changes

Share this:

Font size:

AAA

Fibrocystic breast changes -- once called fibrocystic breast disease -- is a common noncancerous breast condition. More than half of all women have fibrocystic breasts at some point.

Fibrocystic breast changes can occur at any age, but is most common in younger women of childbearing age. Fibrocystic breasts after menopause are not as common. Fibrocystic changes can occur in one or both breasts and in more than one type of breast tissue.

Recommended Related to Women

[End Your Nagging Habit](#)

By Sarah Mahoney How to quit nitpicking It's not even noon on a Sunday, and I've been biting my tongue all morning. When my husband sat down to Web surf two hours ago, I resisted the urge to remind him that he had promised to clean the basement. I held my tongue again when our 13-year-old trashed the kitchen while creating his "it's due tomorrow!" science project. And I even managed to stifle myself when my teenage daughter left a plate in the sink instead of reaching 18 inches...

[Read the End Your Nagging Habit article >>](#)

Types and Causes of Fibrocystic Breast Changes

Most fibrocystic breast changes are the result of monthly hormonal changes and are nothing to be concerned about. However, some may suggest a slightly increased risk of [cancer](#). These may require other tests to confirm a diagnosis.

Types of fibrocystic breast changes are:

Fibrosis. This is fibrous tissue similar to scar tissue. It feels rubbery, firm, or hard to the touch. It does not increase the risk for cancer.

Cysts. These are fluid-filled sacs. Microscopic cysts are too small to feel. These may get bigger and form macrocysts, which may be 1 to 2 inches across; at this size you can feel them.

Cysts may enlarge and become tender right before your period. They tend to be round and movable. But it may be hard to tell the difference between a [cyst](#) and a mass. So you may need other tests to confirm a diagnosis.

Symptoms of Fibrocystic Breast Changes

Common symptoms of fibrocystic breast changes are:

- Breast swelling or thickening
- Lumps within the breast, which may vary in size and texture
- Breast [pain](#) or tenderness

Other symptoms of fibrocystic breast changes include:

- Aching or sharp pain
- Burning
- Itching

Symptoms may change throughout your [menstrual cycle](#). That's because hormones increase the amount of fluid in your breasts. Your breasts may also change during [pregnancy](#) or in response to hormones you take. This includes hormones in birth control pills and hormone replacement therapy.

If you find a lump or other breast change, especially if it remains the same throughout your cycle, see your doctor. Be prepared to answer questions like these:

- Describe your breast lump or changes. Has this changed over time?
- When was your last period? Are you pregnant or nursing?
- Have you had any breast problems in the past?
- Have you ever had a breast [biopsy](#)?
- When was your last mammogram?
- Have you or a family member had [breast cancer](#)?

If a lump becomes firm or has other questionable features, your doctor may request a mammogram, [ultrasound](#), or biopsy to rule out cancer. This involves removing cells and examining them under a microscope.

For cysts, your doctor may suggest fine needle aspiration. This involves using a very thin, hollow needle attached to a syringe to drain fluid. If there is no [blood](#) present and the cyst goes away, you will likely need no further tests.

Treatment of Fibrocystic Breast Changes

In most cases, treatment is not needed for fibrocystic breast changes. But doing a monthly breast exam can help you know what is normal for you and what is new. Your doctor may also suggest regular follow-up.

Removing fluid through fine-needle aspiration may help relieve symptoms of pain or pressure. But know that fluid may return at a later time.

These are other steps that may help with mild discomfort:

- Supportive bras
- Over-the-counter pain relievers such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory [drugs](#) (NSAIDs)
- Reduced intake of [caffeine](#) and stimulants found in coffee, tea, chocolate, and soft drinks

Oral [contraceptives](#) may be a good idea for women with severe symptoms. Although certain vitamins and salt reduction are also sometimes suggested, studies have not confirmed their benefits.

Further Reading:

- [Self Breast Exam](#)
- [What may a benign result on a breast biopsy indicate?](#)
- [Fibrocystic Breasts-Exams and Tests](#)
- [Fibrocystic Breasts-Home Treatment](#)
- [Fibrocystic Breasts-Other Places To Get Help](#)
- [Fibrocystic Breasts-Related Information](#)
- [Fibrocystic Breasts-Symptoms](#)
- [See All Fibrocystic Breasts Topics](#)
- SOURCES:
- American Cancer Society: "Non-Cancerous Breast Conditions."
- American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: "Fibrocystic Breast Changes."