

What are benign breast conditions?

Benign breast conditions are noncancerous disorders that affect the breast. Your doctor may use the term “fibrocystic change” to describe a range of benign breast conditions.

Some benign breast conditions cause discomfort or pain and may need treatment. Others don’t need treatment. Some may mimic breast cancer, so tests are needed to confirm or rule out cancer.

Types of benign breast conditions

There are many types of benign breast conditions (some are listed below). They can differ in how they look or feel. Although benign breast conditions are not breast cancer, some types can increase the risk of breast cancer. If you find out you have a benign breast condition, make sure to ask your doctor which type you have.

Benign Breast Condition	Increases Risk of Breast Cancer?	Other Information
Hyperplasia (usual or atypical) – an overgrowth of cells, most often on the inside of the lobules or ducts in the breast	Yes	More screening and risk reduction options may be recommended
Cyst – a fluid-filled sac that feels like a lump or a tender spot	No	Common in premenopausal women Often does not need to be drained (unless painful)
Fibroadenoma – a smooth, rubbery or hard lump that moves easily within the breast tissue	No	Most common in women ages 15-35 Often does not need to be removed (unless large or painful)
Intraductal papillomas – small growths that occur in the ducts of the breasts that can cause nipple discharge and pain, and you may feel a lump	Risk is increased only if abnormal cells are found or if there’s ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) in the nearby tissue. Risk may be increased if a woman has 5 or more at the time of diagnosis.	Most common in women ages 35-55 Removed with surgery
Sclerosing adenosis – small growths that occur in the ducts of the breasts that can cause nipple discharge and pain, and you may feel a lump	Unclear	Does not need treatment
Radial scar (also called complex sclerosing lesions) – a core of connective tissue fibers	Unclear	Removed with surgery

Learn about **benign breast conditions in men**, including gynecomastia.

This fact sheet is intended to be a brief overview. For more information, visit komen.org or call the Komen Patient Care Center’s Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET and Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET or email at helpline@komen.org. Se habla español.

Resources

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1-877 GO KOMEN

(1-877-465-6636)

[komen.org](https://www.komen.org)

Related online resources:

- [Breast Biopsy](#)
- [Breast Cancer Screening and Follow-up Tests](#)
- [Breast Cancer Risk Factors](#)
- [If You Find a Breast Lump or Change](#)
- [Questions to Ask Your Doctor: If You Find a Lump or Change in Your Breast](#)

What increases the risk of benign breast conditions?

A few things are linked to an increased risk of benign breast conditions, including:

- **Menopausal hormone therapy** (postmenopausal hormone use)
- A **family history** of breast cancer or benign breast conditions

Warning signs of breast cancer

Some of the **warning signs** of breast cancer could also be signs of a benign breast condition. See a 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

In most cases, these changes are not cancer. For example, breast pain is more common with benign breast conditions than with breast cancer. However, the only way to know for sure it's not breast cancer is to get it checked. If a change turns out to be breast cancer, it's best to find it at an early stage when the chances of survival are highest.

Breast lumps or lumpiness

Many women find 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's no cause to worry.

Some lumps will go away on their own. You may notice them before your period, but they go away by the end of your cycle. You may also notice lumps if you take menopausal hormone therapy.

If the lumpiness can be felt throughout the breast and feels like your other breast, it's probably normal breast tissue. Lumps need to be checked if they feel harder, are different from the rest of the breast (or your other breast) or are a change from your normal. This may be a sign of a benign breast condition or breast cancer.

It's normal to worry if you find a lump in your breast, though most lumps are not breast cancer. If you find a new lump or change, see a doctor. Even if you've had a benign lump in the past, don't assume a new lump is also benign.

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