

Breast Pain

Many women experience breast pain or mastalgia at different times in their lives.

Breast pain is any pain, tenderness or discomfort in the breast or underarm region. There are a number of causes of breast pain and women may experience it at different times in their life.

Although many women with breast pain are concerned that they may have cancer, breast pain is not a common symptom of breast cancer.

There are two main types of breast pain; cyclical and non-cyclical pain.



What is cyclical pain?

- is associated with changing hormone levels and the most common type of breast pain.
- becomes more intense a few days before a period begins and gets better as the period progresses
- can be like a heavy, dull ache or can be a stabbing, sharp pain and usually affects both breast. The breast may swell and become lumpy.
- is more likely to affect younger women. Postmenopausal women may experience similar pain if they are on menopause hormonal therapy (MRT) .

What is non-cyclical pain?

- affects just one breast, usually within a small area of the breast, but may spread across the chest
- may be continuous or sporadic and is not associated with the menstrual cycle
- is common among post-menopausal women
- may be caused by an infection, which is called mastitis
- Is often caused by other conditions eg early shingles on the chest wall

Managing breast pain

If you do experience breast pain, especially if it is severe or impacting

on your daily life, you should talk to a health professional so they can determine what sort of pain you have. The treatment will vary depending on the type of pain you have.

What you can do to help?

There are some things you can do that may help:

- Wear a well-fitting bra, a sports bra will give even more support
- Take simple analgesics such as paracetamol
- Apply a topical anti-inflammatory gel to the breasts

There are other products or strategies that many women find helpful. However, there is currently no medical evidence to support their use. These include:

- Flaxseed Oil
- Soy products or supplements
- Vitamin E, B6
- Fish Oil
- Caffeine reduction
- Relaxation

Although there are some prescription medications that may help, they may also have side effects and are not commonly used in Australia. Talk to your doctor.

**To make an appointment at
a True clinic visit
www.true.org.au**

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Reference:

Cromer BA et al. DMP and bone mineral density in adolescents—the Black Box Warning: a Position Paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. *J Adolesc Health* 2006; 39:296.