

Breast Pain (Mastalgia)

Breast pain is not a common sign of breast cancer. Many women have breast pain or tender breasts during their life. Breast pain that comes and goes is called **cyclical**. Breast pain that does not follow a pattern is called **noncyclical**.

Cyclical breast pain may be caused by monthly changes in your hormones. It usually happens in both breasts (bilateral) and can spread throughout the breast. This type of pain can make your breasts feel tender, sore or heavy. This type of pain may come before your menstrual period and go away when your period ends.

Noncyclical breast pain does not come and go with a menstrual period. It can happen at any time and may only be in one breast or a specific area of your breast.

Common causes of breast pain include:

- Large breasts
- Certain medicines
- Fibrocystic breasts
- Pregnancy
- Past breast surgery
- Strain or injury to a muscle or joint

Breast pain, no matter what kind can cause stress, anxiety and change your daily life. Talk to your healthcare provider at your yearly visit if you have ongoing cyclical or noncyclical pain. Your healthcare provider can help find the cause of your breast pain and offer ways to help reduce it.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Some things your healthcare provider may suggest to help lessen your breast pain include:

- Wear a well fitted, supportive bra, such as a sports bra. You may need to be measured to make sure you have the right size.
- Do 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (walking, water aerobics, dancing) 5 days each week or 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity (jogging, running, tennis, step aerobics) 3 days a week. Set a goal based on your ability.
- Reduce the amount of caffeine in your diet.
- Add 25 grams of flax seed a day to your diet each day.
- Use an over-the-counter pain reliever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, if your healthcare provider tells you it is safe for you to do so.
- Use a pain-reducing skin cream on the area such as Voltaren gel 1%.

If these things do not help reduce your breast pain, make an appointment with your healthcare provider to talk about other options to help manage your pain. Your breast health is important and you should always tell your healthcare provider if you have any changes with your breasts.