

## Breast Changes

Most women have changes in their breasts during their lifetime. Many changes or pain are caused by hormones. They are not a sign of a more serious issue such as cancer. Here are other causes of breast pain:

- Badly fitting bra
- Too much coffee
- Smoking cigarettes
- Breast infection

### Before or During Menstrual Periods

It is normal to have breast changes and pain at different times in your menstrual cycle. Breasts may feel swollen, tender, or painful before or during your periods. You may also feel lumps because of extra fluid in the breasts. If you have a breast change that doesn't go away after the end of your period, talk with your health care provider.

You may have dense breast tissue. Taking hormone replacement therapy, birth control pills, or hormone injections can also make breast tissue more dense. Very dense breast tissue can make mammograms harder to read.

This is because dense tissue and tumors can look alike in the images. Tell your health care provider if you take hormones or birth control.

### Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

During pregnancy, your breasts may feel lumpy. This is usually because the glands that produce milk are growing. Milky fluid may also come from your nipples.

Breastfeeding sometimes leads to an infection called mastitis. This happens when a milk duct gets blocked. Signs of a breast infection include:

- Breast gets larger
- Breast is red, tender, swollen, or hot
- Fever is higher than 100.3°F
- Armpit has tender or swollen areas

Mastitis is often treated with antibiotics. Sometimes the milk duct needs to be drained. Here are ways to help prevent breast pain and lower infection risk:

- Feed often or pump milk. When too much milk builds up in the breasts, it can be painful.
- Make sure the baby latches on well during feeding.
- Take care of your nipples to avoid cracking.
- Wean slowly rather than suddenly.

### Nipple Discharge

Nipple discharge is fluid that comes out of one or both breasts. Besides pregnancy, other conditions can cause it:

- A side effect from some medicines
- A growth in the pituitary gland
- A growth in the breast
- An underactive thyroid (called hypothyroid)
- Breast cancer

Some women can squeeze a small amount of yellowish, greenish, or brownish fluid from their nipple. This is normal. It is **not normal** to have fluid come out of the breast without squeezing or if the fluid is clear or bloody. Talk with your health care provider right away.

### Near Menopause

The normal aging process can cause other breast changes. As you near the end of having menstrual periods, called menopause, your breasts may lose tissue and fat. Your menstrual periods may come less often.

Hormone levels also change. This can make your breasts smaller. They may feel tender and lumpy.

### After Menopause

After menopause, your hormone levels drop. Your breast tissue gets less dense and more fatty. You may stop having lumps, pain, or fluid coming from your nipples that you used to have. Because your breast tissue is less dense, mammograms may be easier to read.

If you feel a lump in your breast or fluid comes from your nipple after menopause, talk with your health care provider right away.

## When to Call

Usually, breast changes or pain are not signs of cancer. Know your breasts and what changes are normal for you. If you are worried about breast changes, pain, or infection, talk with your health care provider. Tests such as mammogram, breast ultrasound, or other exams can help find the cause.

For more information, contact Huntsman Cancer Institute's Cleone Peterson Eccles Center for Breast Health at 801-213-4269. To schedule a mammogram appointment, call 801-581-5496.