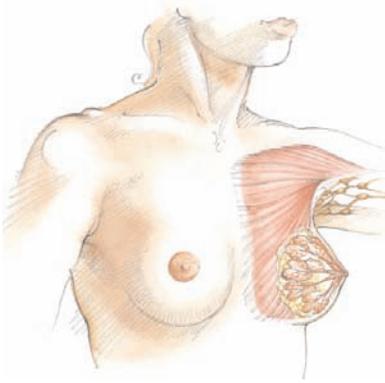
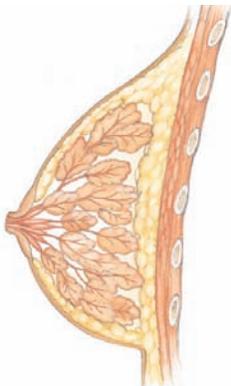


Fibrocystic Breast Changes



In the event of a new lump or discharge, inform your health care provider who will evaluate these changes.



Fibrocystic changes describe the normal changes occurring in a woman's breast from puberty through menopause. Fibrocystic changes are caused by your breast tissue responding to changing levels of female hormones (estrogen and progesterone). The term "fibrocystic disease" is an older term that is more appropriately called "fibrocystic changes."

Fibrocystic changes may include:

- **Lumpiness** – Normal breast tissue can feel lumpy due to the combination of the different breast tissues changing in response to hormonal stimulation. This can create a lumpy feeling. The breasts are made up of glandular tissue (milk ducts more prominent during pregnancy and breast feeding), fibrous tissue, fat tissue, underlying chest wall muscles, and ribs. Any of these areas of the breast may feel like a lump on breast examination.
- **Cysts** – Pockets of fluid may develop due to hormonal stimulation and constriction of a milk duct. Cysts may change in size from month to month and usually require no treatment. You may or may not be able to feel a cyst but if it becomes large enough to be uncomfortable, it can easily be drained.
- **Pain** – Fibrocystic changes often cause breast pain. Breast cancer almost never presents with pain. Breast discomfort is often more apparent approximately two weeks before a menstrual period or in women who are taking hormones after menopause. It can also be caused by irritation of chest wall muscles, ribs, or cartilage which can be relieved by anti-inflammatory medications. **Pain is rarely a symptom of breast cancer.**
- **Nipple secretions** – Tiny droplets of fluid may appear on the nipple surface or on clothing from squeezing the nipple, sexual stimulation, a warm shower, or other stimulation to the breast. It is normal to have fluid in the milk ducts, even if a woman is not pregnant or nursing. Further diagnostic testing should be done if the discharge comes out of the opening of one or both breasts without any stimulation or squeezing. Often this discharge is associated with tiny growths in the milk duct called papillomas which are seldom cancerous. Green, gray, milky, opaque secretions from multiple nipple openings in one or both breasts may point to fibrocystic changes.

Helpful Suggestions

Pain

Remember that pain is almost never an early symptom of breast cancer.

1. Wear a supportive bra especially during strenuous exercise.
2. Minimize caffeine, i.e., coffee, tea, and soft drinks.
3. Restrict the use of salt 1 week before a menstrual period.
4. Exercise regularly at least 2 hours a week.
5. Eat a low-fat diet.
6. Vitamin E – 100 IUs daily.
7. Evening Primrose Oil capsules (7–10 percent GLA content) – 1000–3000mg per day or other omega-3s. Not recommended for patients with schizophrenia and/or those receiving drugs for epilepsy.
8. Vitamin B6 100mg daily.
9. Anti-inflammatory medications (ibuprofen 200–600mg by mouth 2–3 times a day for 1–2 weeks).
10. Moist heat to chest 2–4 times a day.

Some or all of the above mentioned suggestions may help. Try one at a time and if one helps your breast tenderness, there is no need to try the other suggestions.

Nipple Secretions

Observe carefully. Don't squeeze the nipple trying to get secretions out. Check with your health care provider if you experience any of the following:

1. The secretions come out with no stimulation or squeezing and last for more than one month.
2. The secretions come from the nipple opening of one breast.
 - Secretion color may be clear, yellow, or bloody. Place a white tissue on the secretion to check the color.
 - If the secretions are milky, your doctor may order some hormone function testing.

Breast Lumpiness

As women progress toward menopause, breast tissue often feels softer and overall less lumpy. However, with hormone replacement therapy, the lumpiness and tenderness may continue.

General Recommendations

- Always perform monthly Breast Self Examination, commonly during the week after your menses. Report any changes in your breasts to your health care provider.
- Get mammograms starting at age 40 every 1–2 years.
- Eat well, exercise regularly, manage stress, and enjoy life!

Breast care resources

- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

Web sites

- Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, message boards, health classes, and much more.
- Visit your doctor's home page at kp.org/mydoctor
- WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease: womenheart.org
- American Heart Association: americanheart.org
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: nhlbi.nih.gov

Books

- *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook.*
- *Menopause: a Kaiser Permanente Guidebook for Women.*
- *Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book,* Susan M. Love, MD.
- *The American Heart Association Cookbook–25th Anniversary Edition*
- *The 90-Day Fitness Walking Program,* Mark Fenron, Seth Bauer.
- *The No-Nag, No-Guilt, No Hassle Guide to Quitting Smoking,* Tom Ferguson, MD.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.