

FIBROCYSTIC BREAST CONDITION

What is Fibrocystic Breast Condition (FBC)?

- FBC refers to lumpy breasts that occur as a result of *tissue changes*. This is not a disease process but a variation of what is normal.
- Cysts can occur in the ducts and lobules.

What are the changes?

- Cysts (tissue sacs filled with fluid) and changes in the fibrous tissue of the breast (scarring) cause lumpiness, which may be accompanied by pain and tenderness.
- These lumps may come and go in response to hormone changes; especially those associated with the menstrual cycle and may be more apparent the week before menstruation.
- Usually both breasts are involved, but it can occur in one specific area of the breast.

Who is at risk?

- 50-90% of all women are affected by fibrocystic conditions of the breast.
- It is the most common benign (non-cancerous) breast condition.
- It occurs at any age after the onset of menstruation but the most common age is between 30 years and menopause.
- After that, fibrocystic breast condition rarely occurs, except in some women on hormone replacement therapy.

What causes FBC?

At present, there is no known cause for this common condition but it is believed to result from the influence of normal female sex hormones and diet. Research in this area is ongoing.

How is FBC diagnosed?

- A woman may seek help for pain, tenderness, or a lump that she discovers during breast self-examination.
- The doctor or surgeon will take a thorough breast health and family history and then examine your breasts.
- A mammogram and/or breast ultrasound may be ordered.

- A fine needle aspiration biopsy may be necessary to confirm a cystic lump to tell whether a solid lump is benign (non-cancerous).
- If there is any question about diagnosis, removing a lump completely may be advised.

What is the treatment?

- The primary goal of treatment is the relief of pain and tenderness as well as the reduction and/or elimination of cysts.
- There is no one specific treatment for fibrocystic breast condition. Individual recommendations depend on how mild or severe the symptoms are.
- Keep a breast pain chart to track when symptoms are apparent during the month.
- Many women have reported symptom improvement when dietary fat, caffeine and stress are reduced.
- Adding a routine exercise program and taking certain vitamins, such as Vitamin E or Evening Primrose Oil can help reduce symptoms.
- Wearing a comfortable and well supporting bra may also be helpful.
- Painful fluid-filled cysts can be aspirated if large enough. Occasionally cysts do refill after the fluid is removed. Not all cysts need to be drained.

This information is of a general nature and may vary according to your special circumstances. If you have specific questions, please contact your physician or appropriate health care professional.

References:

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