Breast Cancer Support Gibraltar

TYPES OF BREAST PAIN



BREAST PAIN CAN CAUSE A LOT OF ANXIETY, AND MANY WORRY THAT THEY MAY HAVE BREAST CANCER. HOWEVER, BREAST PAIN IS ACTUALLY VERY COMMON IN WOMEN OF ALL AGES.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND MORE.

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF BREAST PAIN

MOST BREAST PAIN IS **NOT CAUSED BY BREAST CANCER**, BUT IT'S STILL IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S CAUSING IT.



CYCLICAL BREAST PAIN

PAIN THAT IS PART OF A WOMAN'S NORMAL MENSTRUAL CYCLE (PERIODS).

NON-CYCLICAL BREAST PAIN

LASTING PAIN IN THE BREAST THAT'S NOT RELATED TO THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE.





CHEST WALL PAIN

PAIN THAT FEELS AS THOUGH IT'S IN THE BREAST BUT IS COMING FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE.

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CYCLICAL BREAST PAIN

WHAT IS IT?

PAIN THAT IS LINKED TO YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE. HORMONAL CHANGES CAN MAKE THE BREAST TISSUE MORE SENSITIVE, CAUSING DISCOMFORT OR LUMPINESS, USUALLY IN THE WEEK BEFORE YOUR PERIOD. THE PAIN OFTEN IMPROVES OR GOES AWAY ONCE YOUR PERIOD STARTS.

CYCLICAL BREAST PAIN CAN ALSO BE ASSOCIATED WITH HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT) OR WHEN STARTING OR CHANGING HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION.



SYMPTOMS

YOU MAY EXPERIENCE:

- HEAVINESS OR TENDERNESS
- A BURNING, PRICKLING OR STABBING PAIN
- A FEELING OF TIGHTNESS

THE PAIN USUALLY AFFECTS BOTH BREASTS, BUT IT CAN AFFECT JUST ONE. IT MAY ALSO SPREAD TO THE ARMPIT, SHOULDER OR DOWN THE ARM.

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NON-CYCLICAL BREAST PAIN

WHAT IS IT?

THE EXACT CAUSE OF NON-CYCLICAL BREAST PAIN IS OFTEN UNCLEAR, BUT IT CAN SOMETIMES BE RELATED TO:

- A BENIGN (NON-CANCEROUS) BREAST CONDITION
- PREVIOUS BREAST SURGERY
- AN INJURY TO THE BREAST
- HAVING LARGER BREASTS
- A SIDE EFFECT OF CERTAIN MEDICATIONS, SUCH AS SOME ANTIDEPRESSANTS OR HERBAL REMEDIES

STRESS AND ANXIETY MAY ALSO MAKE BREAST PAIN FEEL WORSE. IN MANY CASES, THE PAIN IMPROVES OR GOES AWAY ON ITS OWN.

SYMPTOMS

YOU MAY EXPERIENCE:

- A BURNING, PRICKLING OR STABBING PAIN
- A FEELING OF TIGHTNESS

THE PAIN MAY AFFECT ONE OR BOTH BREASTS, AND CAN BE FELT THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE BREAST OR IN ONE SPECIFIC AREA.



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CHEST WALL PAIN

WHAT IS IT?

ALTHOUGH IT MAY FEEL LIKE THE PAIN IS COMING FROM THE BREAST, CHEST WALL PAIN (ALSO KNOWN AS EXTRA-MAMMARY PAIN) ORIGINATES FROM THE MUSCLES, RIBS OR JOINTS BENEATH THE BREAST.

POSSIBLE CAUSES INCLUDE:

- A PULLED OR STRAINED CHEST MUSCLE
- INFLAMMATION OF THE CARTILAGE AROUND THE RIBS, SUCH AS COSTOCHONDRITIS OR TIETZE'S SYNDROME
- LESS COMMONLY, AN UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITION SUCH AS ANGINA OR GALLSTONES



SYMPTOMS

YOU MAY EXPERIENCE:

- A BURNING OR SHARP PAIN
- PAIN SPREADING TO THE ARM OR SHOULDER
- PAIN WORSENS WITH MOVEMENT

THE PAIN MAY AFFECT ONE SIDE, A SPECIFIC AREA, OR A LARGER AREA OF THE CHEST. IT'S OFTEN TENDER TO TOUCH AND CAN USUALLY BE FELT BY PRESSING ON THE AFFECTED AREA.

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HOW TO TREAT BREAST PAIN

TREATMENT WILL DEPEND ON THE UNDERLYING CAUSE.

CHEST WALL PAIN TREATMENT WILL VARYING DEPENGING ON WHETHER IT'S CAUSED BY BY PULLING A MUSCLE OR AN UNDERLYING CONDITION, SUCH AS THE ONES MENTIONED BEFORE. THIS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH A GP.

FOR CYCLICAL AND NON-CYCLICAL BREAST PAIN, TREATMENT IS OFTEN THE SAME. HOWEVER, NON-CYCLICAL PAIN ISN'T ALWAYS EASY TO TREAT.

LIFESTYLE

- KEEP ACTIVE
- REDUCE ACTIVITIES THAT WORSEN SYMPTOMS
- TRACK SYMPTOMS IN A DIARY
- DISCUSS MEDICATIONS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL IF SYMPTOMS BEGAN AFTER STARTING ONE

SELF CARE

- WEAR A SUPPORTIVE BRA
- SIMPLE PAIN RELIEF IF SUITABLE
- WARM OR COLD COMPRESSES
- GENTLE STRETCHING (FOR CHEST WALL PAIN)

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WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE A GP

BREAST PAIN IS COMMON.

MOST BREAST PAIN IS NOT LINKED TO BREAST CANCER, BUT PERSISTENT OR CONCERNING SYMPTOMS SHOULD ALWAYS BE ASSESSED BY A HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL.



ARRANGE AN APPOINTMENT IF:

- THE PAIN DOESN'T IMPROVE
- IT KEEPS COMING BACK
- IT INTERFERES WITH DAILY LIFE
- YOU NOTICE A NEW LUMP
- THERE ARE SKIN CHANGES
- THERE IS NIPPLE DISCHARGE (ESPECIALLY BLOOD-STAINED)
- ONE BREAST CHANGES IN SHAPE OR SIZE
- YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR SYMPTOMS

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WISH TO LEARN MORE?

Access more resources at breastcancernow.org