

## What about the things I have read online?

Some women do seem to get a benefit from the following, although there is little or no scientific evidence for them.

- Evening primrose oil
- Reduction in caffeine (e.g. coffee and chocolate)
- Reduction in fat intake
- Relaxation, complementary therapies

We do not recommend taking any specific vitamin supplements or soya products to treat breast pain.

We would encourage all our patients to eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and avoid smoking.

## Anxiety and Depression

Some women who suffer from breast pain may also be more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression. If this sounds like it might be relevant to you, and you have not found relief from any of the other options, then a trial of antidepressants could help. Please speak to your GP about this treatment.

## Useful sources of further information

Although breast pain is not a symptom of breast cancer, there is helpful information about breast pain, other non-cancerous breast problems and breast examination on some of the larger breast cancer charity websites.

### NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-pain/>

### Breast Cancer Now

<https://breastcancer.org/information-support/have-i-got-breast-cancer/benign-breast-conditions/breast-pain>

If you would like a version of this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio, or other languages please ask a member of staff.

Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust would like to thank Manchester Foundation Trust for allowing us to base this leaflet on their information.

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# Breast Pain

## Information for patients



Following your consultation with our breast team at Mid Cheshire Hospitals, we are happy to reassure you that we have not found anything worrying to cause your symptoms.

This leaflet will help to explain your breast pain and give you some tips on how to manage it.



## Why do my breasts hurt?

It is normal for women to get some breast pain. It happens to up to 70% of women at some point in their lifetime. Your pain is not related to anything worrying e.g. breast cancer.

### Types of breast pain

- **Cyclical:** (related to your menstrual cycle (period)). This type of breast pain happens in the run up to your monthly period. It is caused by normal changes in hormone levels. The pain can be 'dull', 'achy' or 'heavy'. Usually it is felt in both breasts, but can be just one side and can spread to the armpit. It does not tend to affect women whose periods have stopped.
- **Non-cyclical:** (not related to your periods). This pain can be constant and there is no link to your monthly hormone changes. It can be a 'burning' or 'sore' pain in one or both breasts.
- **Chest Wall:** Women can feel as though pain is coming from the breast, but it is actually coming from somewhere else such as the chest muscles. Watch how much heavy lifting you do and make sure your bra is not digging into your side.

## What can I do to manage the pain?

- **Reassurance**  
For nearly all women, seeing a breast specialist, being examined and told that the pain is nothing to be worried about is enough to give peace of mind and manage with the pain.
- **Bra Fitting**  
Up to 70% of women wear a bra that does not fit properly. Visit your local specialist underwear shop or department store to be measured correctly. Wearing a supportive bra can provide comfort. Try this for at least six weeks to see a benefit. Some ladies find wearing a supportive top at night-time can also help.
- **Exercise**  
If you are able, regular exercise, whilst wearing a 'high impact' sports bra, for 30 minutes three times week, can reduce breast pain and is good for health and relaxation.
- **Pain Relief**  
Up to 80% of women have found pain relief from anti-inflammatory gels and creams. We suggest 'diclofenac gel' or 'ibuprofen gel' which can be bought at your local pharmacy. If the pain is all over your breast then an ibuprofen tablet might work better. You could also try regular paracetamol. Please speak to your pharmacist if you are taking other medication.
- **Do not smoke**  
If you are a smoker, your GP will be able to help with advice on how to quit.

## Is there anything else I need to know?

- **Anti-oestrogen drugs**  
This may be an option when all else has failed, as for a small number of women their breast pain is very severe and does not improve with the advice in this leaflet. There are risks and side effects with this treatment. Therefore it needs careful thought, as women often feel that the side effects are worse than the pain.
- **The contraceptive pill and Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)**  
In some women the contraceptive pill has shown to increase pain and in others it has decreased it. If you have recently started the pill or HRT and feel your pain is worse, speak with your GP to look at alternative contraception or hormone replacement, maybe one with a lower dose of oestrogen.
- **Be breast aware**  
You should continue to check your breasts even though they are sore. If you have pain that comes and goes, try to work out when your breasts are less sore and check them at this time. You should report any new changes in either breast to your GP.

Advice on how to check your breasts is available on **NHS Choices**

<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/womens-health/how-should-i-check-my-breasts/>