

BREAST PAIN

Mastalgia

For more information contact:

Cancer Screening and Control Services
on (03) 6216 4300.

Or:

The Jean Hailes Foundation
www.jeanhailes.org.au

- Causes
- Types of pain
- What may help

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Breast pain?

Many women will experience breast pain during their lives. Breast pain (sometimes called mastalgia) is relatively common. Some women fear that it is associated with breast cancer.

However, breast pain alone is rarely a sign of breast cancer.

What causes breast pain?

- Hormones
- Pregnancy
- Weight gain
- Bra problems
- Infection of the breast (mastitis)
- Injury to the breast (injury will not cause breast cancer)
- Inflammation
- Some forms of hormone replacement therapy
- Cysts – see BreastScreen Tasmania’s brochure on benign breast changes.

There are two types of breast pain:

1. **Cyclic breast pain** – associated with the menstrual cycle.
 - This is the most common type of breast pain. The pain is probably caused by the sensitivity of the breast tissue to your hormones. This can be different in each breast.
 - Cyclic breast pain may occur days or weeks before your period and can vary in its intensity with the menstrual cycle. It is commonly relieved once your period begins.
 - Some women experience pain up into the armpit or pain that radiates around the rib cage.

2. **Non-Cyclic Breast Pain** – not associated with the menstrual cycle.

- Pain may come from the breast but is unrelated to the menstrual cycle. This is more common in older women. If the pain begins suddenly, is sharp or stabbing, and confined to one area, it is advisable to talk to your doctor.

What may help?

Many women find that after trying some of these suggestions, their breast pain is reduced.

- **Choose a supportive bra** – this lessens the movement of the breast on the chest wall. It is worth visiting a person trained in fitting bras to ensure the correct size and type. Wearing a soft supportive bra at night may be helpful.
- **Complementary Therapies** – some women find Vitamins B1 and B6 may help to relieve breast pain. Evening Primrose Oil may help to relieve pre-menstrual pain. Check with your doctor or pharmacist about recommended doses.
- **Change your diet** – reducing your caffeine (coffee, tea, cola and chocolate), salt and fat intakes can be helpful.
- **Manage your stress** – relaxation and meditation may be helpful. Do something you enjoy. Take time for yourself.
- **Talk to your doctor**

It may be worthwhile to note in a diary if your breast pain comes and goes in a regular pattern. Each day record how intense the pain is on a scale of 1-5.

Note when your period starts. Also record other details such as changes in your diet or any stressful events. This information will help your doctor recommend simple and effective treatments.

If you have persistent, unusual pain, talk to your doctor.