

Breast Lump 101

What You Need to Know About Breast Lumps

Up to half of all women will experience [breast lumps](#) in their lifetime. While finding a breast lump can be concerning, it is important to remember that not all breast lumps are breast cancer. In fact, most breast lumps are not cancerous. However, all breast lumps should be checked immediately by a healthcare provider.

About Breast Lumps

- A breast lump is a mass, growth, or swelling within the breast tissue.
- Breast lumps are common, affecting up to 50% of women at some point in their lives. ^[1]
- 60-80% of all breast lumps are benign (non-cancerous). ^[2]
- There are many conditions that may cause benign lumps in the breast.

Common Types of Benign (Non-Cancerous) Breast Lumps

- **Fibroadenoma:** The most common type of benign breast lumps that occur primarily in women in their 20s and 30s, but can occur at any age. Fibroadenomas may feel rubbery to the touch and move around freely. They are usually painless, vary in size, and can form anywhere in the breast tissue.
- **Fibrocystic breasts:** Occurs in women with [dense breast tissue](#) and refers to changes in the breasts that naturally occur due to hormonal fluctuations during a woman's monthly menstrual cycle. These changes may lead to the breasts feeling lumpy, swollen, and sore right before a woman's period.
- **Breast cyst:** A fluid-filled sac that grows within the breast tissue. A [breast cyst](#) that forms on the surface of the breast may feel like a grape and be soft in texture. A cyst that forms deeper within the breast may feel like a hardened lump because it is covered by tissue.
- **Fat necrosis:** A non-cancerous breast lump that may form if the breast has been injured. Breast injury may include a [biopsy](#) or surgery. This type of lump forms in the fatty breast tissue of the injured area.
- **Lipoma:** A slow-growing, fatty lump that forms just under the surface of the skin. Some may weigh only a few grams while others can be large enough to produce a visible bulge. Lipomas are soft to the touch and move around freely when touched.

[1] [Cleveland Clinic](#)

[2] [National Institutes of Health](#)

- **Mastitis:** Inflammation within the breast tissue caused by an infection. Mastitis causes [breast pain](#), swelling, and redness of the skin. Although mastitis doesn't present as a true breast lump, symptoms like swelling can often be mistaken for a lump.
- **Breast abscess:** A collection of fluid or pus pocket in the breast, most often caused by untreated mastitis. A breast abscess can be very painful and presents as a red, swollen lump in the breast.
- **Milk cyst:** A fluid-filled sac, also called a galactocele, that almost exclusively occurs in lactating women. A milk cyst is filled with breastmilk and causes a blockage of the mammary duct.
- **Intraductal papilloma:** A wart-like lump that may develop in the milk ducts of the breasts. Intraductal papillomas, most common in women over 40, often form close to the nipple, but can occur elsewhere in the breast as well.

Breast Lump Warning Signs

Although breast lumps are common and many are non-cancerous, there are several breast lump warning signs to be aware of. See your healthcare provider right away if you notice:

- A new lump, thickening, or swelling of the breast tissue not previously noticed by you or your doctor
- A lump that feels hard to the touch or different from the rest of the breast tissue
- A known lump that begins to grow or change
- A lump that does not go away after menstruation
- A lump that causes pain or discomfort