

Fibrocystic Breasts Changes

What are Fibrocystic Changes ?

Fibrocystic changes are the most common cause of breast lumps found in women between 30 and 50 years of age. It is so common that the American Cancer Society no longer calls it Fibrocystic breast disease. Other names for the condition are cystic disease or chronic cystic mastitis. It is not a cancer of the breast.

What are the symptoms and causes?

The condition is commonly found in both breast especially in the upper outer quadrants and the underside of the breast. Fibrocystic changes are related to the way breast tissue responds to the female hormones. When the breast are stimulated by hormones of the menstrual cycle, swelling occurs in blood vessels, milk glands and milk ducts and the breast retain fluid. The breast may feel swollen, tender, and lumpy. After the period, the swelling decreases and the tenderness and lumpiness decrease. After repeated cycles of hormones, pockets of fluid called cysts may form in the milk ducts. After menopause, the breasts usually improve.

Diagnosis of Fibrocystic Changes

Cysts may be detected by physical exam, mammography, or sonography (ultrasound). The diagnosis may also be made with a breast biopsy. Simple cysts can also be drained with a syringe in a doctor's office. By doing self-breast exams each month after her period, a woman will get used to what is normal for her. If a change is found she will know to consult her physician who may recommend further evaluation depending on the findings.

Treatment of Fibrocystic Breast

Avoiding food and drinks that contain caffeine may relieve the symptoms. This includes coffee, tea, many soft drinks, and chocolates. A good supporting bra and local heat application may also add relief. Aspirin or other pain relievers or Primrose oil may also be recommended. Lumps that do not resolve with observation and needle drainage may need to be removed surgically.