

- It may be useful to keep a record of your breast pain to see whether there is a pattern. Keep a diary for a couple of months. Mark the days you experience pain plus the days when your menstruation occurred.

Record other details such as any changes in your diet and if there have been any stressful events. All this information will assist the GP in obtaining a clearer understanding of your breast pain.

#### Remember

- Many women will experience breast pain during their lives
- Breast pain alone is rarely a sign of breast cancer
- If you are concerned about any breast pain, it is advisable to talk to your GP.

If you have persistent breast pain it is advisable to talk to your GP.

Your GP may perform a breast examination and refer you for further tests such as a diagnostic mammogram and/or ultrasound of your breast.

Women 40 years or over with no breast symptoms (specifically targeting women 50 to 74 years) have a FREE screening mammogram at BreastScreen WA every two years.

#### Once is not enough.

The earlier a breast cancer is detected the better the chance of successful treatment.

**Online bookings** are available for most appointments.

[www.breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au)

Alternatively phone: **13 20 50**

Please bring your Medicare card with you to your appointment.

#### BreastScreen WA

Telephone (08) 9323 6700

Email [breastscreenwa@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:breastscreenwa@health.wa.gov.au)

**Bookings 13 20 50**

National Relay Service [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)

Translating Interpreting Service (TIS) 13 14 50



[www.breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au)

© BreastScreen WA 2021  
with acknowledgement to BreastScreen Tasmania



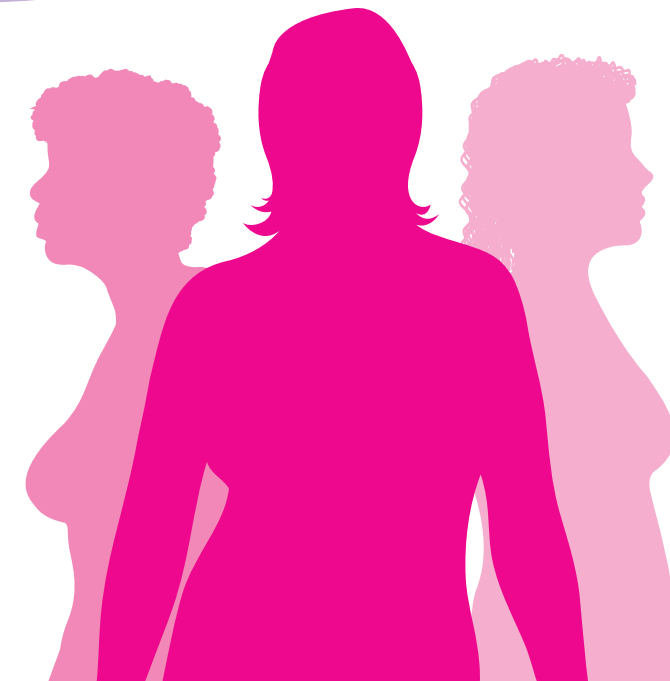
Government of Western Australia  
North Metropolitan Health Service



BreastScreen WA

# Breast pain

## Want to know more?



[www.breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.breastscreen.health.wa.gov.au)

# 13 20 50

### How common is breast pain?

- Many women will experience breast pain during their lives.
- We often think that pain is a sign that something is wrong and even serious, although this is rarely the case with breast pain.
- Breast pain can vary from mild to severe. Some women experience an ache, whilst others experience a stabbing sensation.
- Breast pain alone is rarely a sign of breast cancer.

### What causes breast pain?

- Hormonal changes
- 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
- Simple breast cysts.

### Are there different types of breast pain?

Breast pain (known as mastalgia) can be divided into two types called cyclic and non-cyclic pain.

### Cyclic breast pain

- This is the most common type of breast pain and is associated with the menstrual cycle. The pain is probably related to the sensitivity of breast tissue to your hormones. This can be different in each breast.
- Frequently the pain occurs 3-7 days prior to menstruation, although some women can experience tenderness starting in the middle of the cycle with ovulation and continuing for two weeks until menstruation starts.
- In general, cyclic breast pain is harmless, but if you are concerned please see your GP.

### Non-cyclic breast pain

Non-cyclic breast pain is more common in older women. There are two types of non-cyclic breast pain.

- The first type of pain may originate from the breast but is unrelated to your menstrual cycle. This is more common in older women before and after menopause. Often the pain is described as a sharp or stabbing pain and is confined to one spot.

A side effect of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can be breast tenderness.

If the pain begins suddenly, continues and is confined to one spot, it is advisable to visit your GP.

- The second type of pain may be felt in the region of the breast but is coming from somewhere else. This type of pain nearly always involves the bones, joints or muscles and is called musculoskeletal pain.

Pain in the chest wall or spine may cause discomfort in the breast. Arthritis or a pinched nerve in the neck may be the cause.

### Screening mammography

To obtain a clear picture and to minimise radiation dose, the breast is positioned and compressed between two flat plates. This may be uncomfortable, but the compression lasts only a few seconds.

If your breasts become tender before your period you may find it more comfortable to have a mammogram during or just after a period.

### Hints to relieve breast pain

Here are some suggestions that may be worth trying:

- Choose a supportive bra that fits correctly to lessen the movement of the breast on the chest wall. This is especially important if your breasts are fuller and if you participate in activities such as jogging or aerobics.
- Wearing a soft bra at night can be helpful.
- Visit a person trained in fitting bras to ensure you are wearing the correct size and type of bra. Bras with under-wire can cause discomfort for some women.