

BreastScreen WA Information for Women

Breast Cysts

Many factors can cause changes in your breasts. The most common are normal hormonal changes related to your menstrual cycle, pregnancy, menopause and changes due to ageing.

Other common causes of changes to the breast, which are not of concern, include fluid-filled sacs called **cysts**.

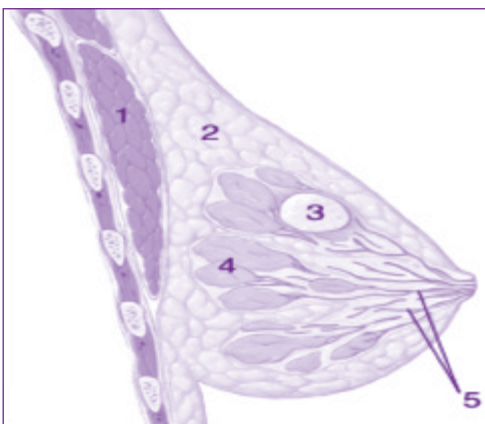
Fluid is produced and absorbed by the breast as part of the usual cycle of hormonal breast changes. Although we don't know why some women are more susceptible to breast cysts than others, we do know they are common in women aged 35-60 years and in women who are taking hormone replacement therapy.

Simple cysts are not cancer and do not change into cancer.

Many women have a cyst or a number of cysts without knowing it, and they do not usually require treatment. Some women first detect their cyst as a painful lump and they may decide to have it drained by a doctor. Aspiration (draining) is done by inserting a fine needle into the cyst to draw out the fluid and is usually a simple and fairly painless procedure.

A woman, who has a history of cysts, should never assume that if she feels a new lump that it is a cyst. She should see a doctor who can examine her and/or arrange an ultrasound to make sure that the lump is just a cyst.

Diagram of a breast containing a breast cyst:



1. Pectoralis muscle
2. Fatty breast tissue
3. Benign breast cyst
4. Breast glands
5. Milk ducts

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