



A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS
BENIGN BREAST DISEASE
What is a Cyst?

The Breast Health Navigator is a healthcare professional with specialized knowledge in breast health.

She is available to answer any of your questions or provide more information about breast health.

Breast Health Navigator
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What is a cyst?

A cyst is a non-cancerous, fluid filled sac that when found in the breast, can present as a lump, lumpiness, tenderness or pain.

Who is prone to cysts?

Most often cysts occur in women between 30-55 years old, but they can occur in younger women and in women after menopause. The susceptibility of cysts is not fully understood, but is thought to be hormone and/or diet related.

Why do cysts occur?

Each breast contains approximately 15-20 ducts that serve as channels for milk to travel through them. A cyst is formed when the narrow walls of a duct become blocked.

As the normal secretions of the duct build up, the walls of the duct expand to create a round, fluid filled sac – a cyst.

How are cysts diagnosed?

The first step in diagnosing a cyst is to schedule a clinical breast examination with your primary healthcare provider.

If it's suspected that you have a cyst, you will be booked for a mammogram and/or ultrasound for further investigation and to rule out other breast diseases.

How are cysts treated?

The majority of cysts are left alone, and do not need treating. Sometimes large cysts can be treated by having the fluid withdrawn with a small needle, this procedure is called **cyst aspiration**. It is not necessary to aspirate all cysts as they are harmless.

Discussion between the patient, radiologist, and primary healthcare provider will help a patient to make a more informed decision about the management of their cyst(s).

Do cysts put a woman at higher breast cancer risk?

Cysts **do not** increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer in her lifetime.

It is important to note that any new lump that a woman finds in her breast should always be investigated further by her primary healthcare provider.

References:

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