

BREAST HEALTH:

WHAT IS NORMAL?



BREAST HEALTH

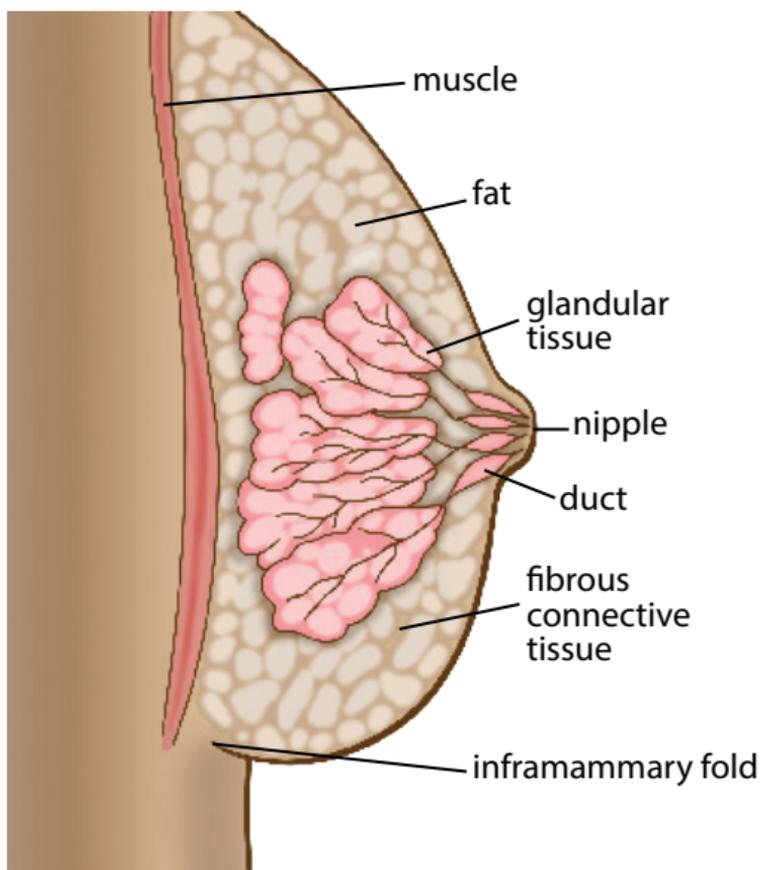
Breast health is an important part of overall health and well-being. To keep your breasts as healthy as possible:

1. Be breast aware
2. Be informed
3. Be healthy, make healthy choices

1 Be Breast Aware

It is important to know how your breasts normally look and feel so you can notice changes. Everybody has breast tissue. Breast tissue covers your chest from the underarms to the breastbone and from the collarbone down to under the breast. Breast tissue can feel lumpy because it is made up of different tissues including:

- fat
- glandular
- fibrous connective



Common Breast Concerns

See your healthcare provider if you notice any changes to your breasts.

Breast Lumps

Lumps are often part of normal breast tissue.

Your breasts go through many changes over your lifetime. Factors that can change the lumpiness or the way your breasts feel include:

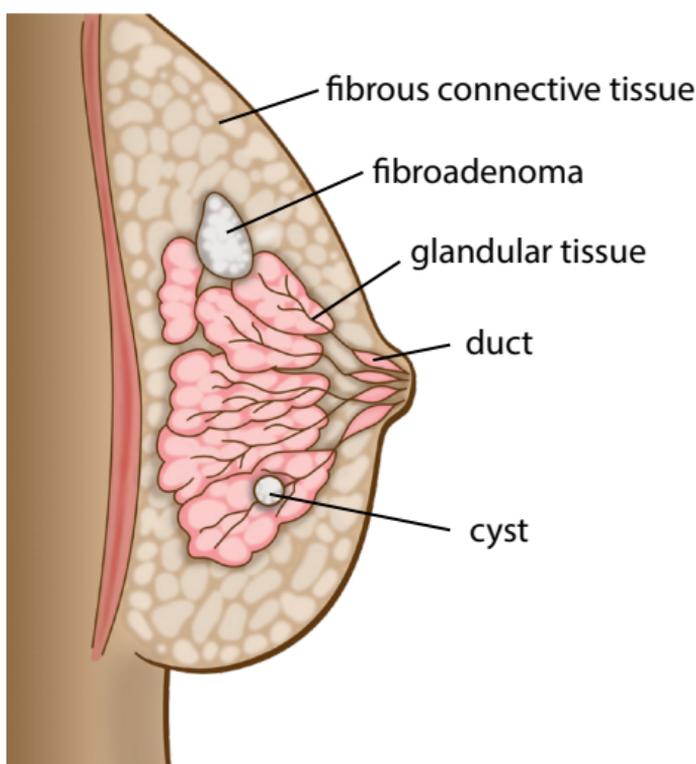
- age
- changes in hormone levels (e.g. menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding, menopause, hormone therapy)
- weight changes



Lumpy breasts may feel more tender before a period. Common causes of lumpy breasts include:

- a **cyst** which:
 - is a pocket of fluid that is oval or round-shaped.
 - may increase in size before a period.
 - is more common for women aged 30-50 just before menopause.
- a **fibroadenoma**, which can occur at any age:
 - is a solid, smooth lump that feels firm and round.
 - can vary in size and number.
- **fibrocystic** breasts, which can occur at any age, may:
 - make breasts feel lumpy, tender, and swollen.
 - may cause pain throughout the breast or in one area, often near the armpit.
 - feel like lumps change in size.

Remember, if you find a new lump or a change in your breast, you should see your healthcare provider.



Breast Pain

Breast pain is common and can happen at any time. It is **not** common for breast pain to be caused by cancer.

Sometimes what *feels* like breast pain is pain from the ribs, cartilage, or muscles behind the breast.

Wearing a bra that fits well and provides support may help with breast pain.

See your healthcare provider if you have breast pain that:

- worsens
- does not go away
- affects sleep or activities

Nipple Discharge

A small amount of fluid may come out of your nipple when squeezed. The fluid may be green, yellow, brown, or grey. This is normal, particularly before menopause. Do **not** squeeze nipples because it may cause more fluid to come out. See your healthcare provider if you have fluid from your nipple(s) that:

- is new.
- happens without squeezing the nipple.
- is only from one nipple.
- is bloody.



Breast Infection

A breast infection can affect anyone but is more common in people who are breastfeeding. An infection can be caused by germs that enter through a break or crack in the skin, often around the nipple. See your healthcare provider if your breast or part of your breast is:

- red and swollen.
- feels warm and tender.

Know Your Breasts

See your healthcare provider if you notice any of the changes listed below.



Puckering of the skin



A change in the nipple



New or bloody discharge



Change in the size, shape,
or colour



Thickened hard skin that
feels different than the rest
of your breast tissue



A new lump

2 Be Informed

The cause of breast cancer is not known.

While we do not know the cause of breast cancer, many things can increase your risk of developing breast cancer. Some risk factors:

- we **can** change, like food or exercise choices.
- we **cannot** change, like age or family history.

The **two most common breast cancer risk factors** are:

- being female.
- getting older.

Talk to your healthcare provider about your risk of breast cancer and how you can reduce your risk.

Breast Density

Breast density is **not** related to how your breasts look or feel.

Breast density is a term used to describe how breast tissue looks on a mammogram (breast x-ray). A radiologist is a specially trained doctor who looks at medical test images to diagnose and treat disease. A radiologist can tell if you have dense breasts by looking at your mammogram.

When a person has more glandular and fibrous tissue than fatty tissue, their breast tissue may be called dense. Having dense breasts is common, around fifty percent of all women are considered to have dense breasts.



Breast density can:

1. Slightly increase your risk of developing breast cancer.
2. Make it harder to see cancer on a mammogram.

Most breast cancers are found on a mammogram. Some cancers are not seen on a mammogram. This is more common if the breast tissue is extremely dense.

Mammography is the best way to screen for breast cancer. More research is needed to tell us if extra tests or more frequent screening is necessary in women with dense breasts. A radiologist may recommend additional tests if they think it is best for you.

Breast density is one of many risk factors for breast cancer. If you are concerned about your risk of developing breast cancer, discuss your risk factors with your healthcare provider.

Hormone use has potential benefits and risks

There is a lot of research on hormone use, such as birth control and hormone replacement therapy (HRT), and their effect on breast cancer risk. If you are considering using hormones, it is important to talk to your healthcare provider about the potential benefits and potential risks.

3

Be Healthy, Make Healthy Choices

Make healthy choices to help reduce your risk of breast cancer.



Move more

Every 10 minutes of activity you do counts! Being physically active helps you keep a healthy weight and lowers your risk of breast cancer.



Maintain a healthy weight

The more weight gained as an adult and after menopause, the higher the risk of breast cancer later in life.



Avoid alcohol

If you choose to drink alcohol, limit the amount to one to two standard drinks per week to lower your risk of breast cancer. Drinking any amount of alcohol increases your risk of breast cancer.



Eat healthy

Eat a variety of foods, including whole grains, lots of fruits and vegetables, legumes (dried peas, beans and lentils), and healthy fat. Eat less highly processed foods, added sugar, sweetened beverages, and sodium.



Live smoke free

Using tobacco increases your risk of getting breast cancer. This risk is higher the younger you start smoking.

AGE

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

<40

- Know what looks and feels normal for your breasts.
 - The risk of breast cancer is low.
-

40-49

- Know what looks and feels normal for your breasts.
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should begin screening.
-

50-74

- Know what looks and feels normal for your breasts.
 - Over half of women diagnosed with breast cancer are over age 50.
 - Most women age 50-74 should have a screening mammogram every two years. Trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people may also need regular mammograms.
 - Call 1-855-952-4325 to book a screening mammogram at BreastCheck.
-

75+

- Know what looks and feels normal for your breasts.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should continue screening mammography.

- Breast health is an important part of your health, no matter your age or gender.
- Know what looks and feels normal for your breasts. See your healthcare provider if you notice any changes.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about your risk for breast cancer and ways to reduce your risk.
- If you are age 50-74, call BreastCheck at 1-855-952-4532 to make a breast cancer screening mammogram appointment.
- Visit our websites to learn more about breast health.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

(INTERPRETER SERVICES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST)

CancerCare Manitoba

www.cancercare.mb.ca/breastcheck

Toll free: 1-855-952-4532

Breast & Gyne Cancer Centre of Hope

www.cancercare.mb.ca/hope

P: 204-787-2970

Toll free: 1-866-561-1026

Shared Health

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/bhc>

P: 204-235-3906

Toll free: 1-888-501-5219

Des services d'interprétation sont offerts sur demande.