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Breast Pain in Women

Breast pain is a common problem in women who are having periods (menstrual cycles). It is less common in older women. The pain can be in one breast or in both. It may come and go each month, or it may last for several weeks, or even months.

What causes breast pain?

Many things can cause pain or tenderness in your breasts. Here are some of them:

- Hormone changes during your period
- Water retention, which may happen during your period
- Injury to your breast
- Pregnancy
- Breast-feeding (nursing)
- An infection in the breast
- Breast cancer (not a usual cause of breast pain)

If you have breast pain that lasts for a long time or keeps coming back, it's probably a good idea to talk to your doctor about it.

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How can my doctor find the cause of my breast pain?

Your doctor will ask you questions to find the cause of your pain and decide if you need treatment. He or she may ask you to describe the pain and where in your breast area you feel it. Your doctor will also check to see if you have lumps in your breasts.

If you're younger than 35 years of age and don't have a breast lump, your doctor might decide that you don't need any tests. If you're older than 35 years of age and don't have a breast lump, your doctor may still want you to get a mammogram. A mammogram is a special X-ray of the breasts.

If you do have a lump (or several lumps) in your breast, your doctor might decide that you need one or more of these tests:

- A mammogram
- A breast sonogram. This painless test uses sound waves to make a picture of the lump.
- A breast biopsy. For this test, some tissue is taken out of your breast and looked at under a microscope.

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How is breast pain treated?

There are different treatments for breast pain depending on what is causing it. You and your doctor can talk about these treatments and choose one or more that might work for you. Here are some possible treatments for breast pain:

- Wearing a support bra
- Taking an over-the-counter pain medicine
- Taking danazol (for severe pain)

Other treatments for breast pain are sometimes used. However, there is no proof that these treatments work:

- Avoiding caffeine
- Using less salt
- Taking vitamin E or vitamin B6
- Taking a "water-pill" (a diuretic)

Most of the time, breast pain goes away on its own after a few months.

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Source

[Written by familydoctor.org editorial staff.](#)

[The Evaluation of Common Breast Problems](#) by M Morrow, M.D. (*American Family Physician* April 15, 2000, <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20000415/2371.html>)

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