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Home Illnesses and conditions Cancer Cancer types in adults Paget’s disease of the nipple Paget’s disease of the nipple, also known as Paget’s disease of the breast, is a rare type of breast cancer. The term Paget’s disease of the nipple is used to distinguish the condition from Paget’s disease of the bone, which occurs when the normal cycle of bone growth is disrupted, leading to the bones becoming weak and deformed. A similar type of skin cancer can also occur in other parts of the body. The rest of this section will use the term Paget’s disease to refer to Paget’s disease of the nipple or breast. Paget’s disease usually affects the skin of one nipple and produces eczema-like symptoms, appearing as an itchy, red rash on the nipple that can extend to the darker area of surrounding skin (the areola). It can also appear as a small ulcer or dry, red, flaky patches of skin similar to psoriasis. Other possible symptoms include: If you’re experiencing itchiness, burning or bleeding but the nipple looks normal and isn’t red, dry or scaly – this is extremely unlikely to be Paget’s disease but should still be checked by a doctor. Paget’s disease is usually a sign of breast cancer in tissue behind the nipple, or breast tissue away from the nipple. The breast cancer can either be: In a small amount of cases, the only evidence of Paget’s disease is the nipple changes. In about half of all cases of Paget’s disease of the nipple, a lump is found in the breast. The majority of people with a lump will have invasive breast cancer, although this does not necessarily mean it has spread. Most people with Paget’s disease of the nipple who don’t have a lump will have non-invasive breast cancer. You should visit your GP if you notice any changes in the skin of your nipple or areola (the darker area of skin around the nipple). As Paget’s disease is a form of breast cancer, the sooner it’s diagnosed, the better the outcome is likely to be. Speak to your GP if you develop a lump in your breast. While most breast lumps are not cancerous, it’s important you have it checked out. Read more about: Paget’s disease is treated in the same way as breast cancer. Surgery is usually the first line of treatment but unlike other forms of breast cancer, it involves removing breast tissue that includes the nipple and areola. This may be followed by a combination of: If Paget’s disease is detected and treated in its early stages, there’s a good chance of recovery. Read more about how Paget’s disease is treated. Modifying certain lifestyle factors, such as reducing alcohol intake and regular exercise, may reduce your risk of developing certain types of cancer, including breast cancer. However, these factors remain controversial.