

# Breast pain

There are many reasons your breasts can be sore. Breast pain by itself is very unlikely to be a symptom of cancer.

There are different types of breast pain.

Your breasts may feel:

- tender
- hot to touch
- sore - a dull ache or sharp pain

Breast pain can be continuous or you might get it only now and again.

## Breast pain and periods

Normal hormonal changes can cause breast pain in women age 20 to 50.

Breast pain caused by periods can:

- be a dull, heavy or aching pain that can range from mild to very bad
- begin up to 2 weeks before your period, gets worse and then goes away when your period starts

Breast pain caused by periods is common. It'll usually affect both breasts. Sometimes the pain spreads to your armpits. It can affect the whole breast or just the outer part of the breast.

[Periods](#)

## Breast pain and menopause

Hormone changes before menopause can cause breast pain. Once you have reached menopause the pain usually stops.

[Menopause](#)

## Breast pain as a sign of infection

Conditions like mastitis or a breast abscess can cause breast pain along with other symptoms.

This can happen if you're breastfeeding. But it can also happen if a nipple duct (thin tube in your nipple) gets infected for some other reason.

[Mastitis while breastfeeding](#)

## Other causes of breast pain

You might get breast pain if you:

- have a neck, shoulder or back injury - these can be mistaken for breast pain
- are taking the contraceptive pill or some antidepressants - check the side effects listed in the leaflet
- are pregnant
- drink a lot of caffeine
- have poor posture

Sometimes the pain may be in your chest wall, ribs, or muscles that lie behind the breast. It may not be pain in your breast.

Sometimes no cause is found for breast pain.

## Be breast aware

It's important to check your breasts regularly from your mid 20s. This is sometimes called being breast aware.

[How to check your breasts](#)

## Treating breast pain

### What you can do to ease breast pain

You can:

- take paracetamol or ibuprofen, or rub painkilling gel on your breasts
- wear a properly fitted bra during the day and a soft bra to sleep in
- take evening primrose oil

### Contact a GP about breast pain if:

- it's not improving or painkillers are not helping
- you have [a very high temperature](#) (40 degrees Celsius or higher) or feel hot and shivery
- your breast or part of it is red, hot, hard or swollen

- you might be pregnant - you could do a pregnancy test first
- you have a [lump in your breast or armpit](#)
- you have discharge from your nipple
- you have itchy or red areas around your nipple
- your nipple recently turned in, pulled up or down
- the skin of your breast has changed - it is dimpled (like orange peel) or scaly
- you have a family history of breast cancer

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