

# Breast lumps

If you feel a lump in your breast, get it checked by a GP as soon as you feel it. Most breast lumps are harmless but some can be serious.

Men and women can get breast lumps.

## Go to a GP if you notice:

- a lump in your breast or armpit
- swelling or a lump in the armpit
- a change or size in shape of your breasts
- lumpiness or thickening
- dimpling or puckering of your skin - it will look similar to orange peel
- newly inverted (turned-in) nipples
- bloodstained discharge from the nipple
- a rash, on the nipple or surrounding area - this can look like eczema

Changes in the breasts can be a sign of breast cancer. This is easier to treat if it's found early.

[Breast cancer in women](#)

[Breast cancer in men](#)

## What to look out for

It's important to check your breasts regularly.

This means learning how your breasts look and feel at different times. Doing this helps you to know what is normal for you and when there is a change in your breasts.

[How to check your breasts](#)

[Finding breast cancer early - mariekeatingfoundation.ie](#)

## What happens at your GP appointment

The GP will look at and examine your breasts.

If they're not sure what's causing the lump, they'll refer you to a hospital or breast clinic for further tests.

These tests usually show that a lump is not cancer.

## Waiting times for a breast clinic appointment

After your GP refers you, the hospital or breast clinic will contact you to give you an appointment.

How long you will have to wait depends on the hospital or breast clinic.

Your appointment is usually within:

- 2 weeks if they think your case is urgent
- 12 weeks for all other cases

## What happens at the breast clinic

At the hospital or breast clinic, you may have a:

- breast examination
- scan - usually a breast x-ray (mammogram) or ultrasound
- biopsy - where a needle is inserted into the lump to remove some cells for testing

These tests are often done during the same visit. You'll usually be told the results on the same day. Biopsy results take longer - you should get them within a week.

But sometimes you will need another biopsy or surgery to find out what the cause is.

Treatment for a lump depends on the cause. Most are harmless and may go away on their own without treatment.

## Types of breast lumps

There are a number of types of breast lump and breast swelling.

They include:

- a lump that feels hard or does not move
- a lump that is smooth to the touch and moves easily under the skin (fibroadenoma)
- soft, fatty lumps that grow under your skin (lipoma)
- a fluid-filled lump just underneath the skin (cyst) - this can sometimes be painful

- when boys' and men's breast tissue swells and grows larger (gynaecomastia)

## Causes of breast lumps

Breast lumps can have lots of different causes.

Most are due to something harmless, such as a non-cancerous tissue growth (fibroadenoma) or a build-up of fluid (breast cyst).

But sometimes they can be a sign of something serious, such as breast cancer.

Do not try to self-diagnose the cause of your lump - always go to a GP.

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