

All breast lumps must be investigated, even though 90% are harmless. Early detection often means a smaller operation if needed.

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**Breast Care Team**

# **Benign Breast Lumps**



**Patient Advice Leaflet**

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## Benign Breast Lump

It is very common for women to have lumps or 'lumpy' areas in their breasts.

The majority of lumps or 'lumpy' areas are harmless or 'benign', in other words they are not cancer.

The breasts of pre-menopausal women often change during their monthly cycle. Breast tissue becomes sensitive to hormones in the blood, this is known as 'Hormone Dependent Change'.

It is important for a women to get to know how her breasts feel throughout the month so that she knows what is normal for her. The breasts will probably be most painful and lumpy just before a period.

If there is a lump or lumpy area that you are worried about it is wise to have your breasts examined by a doctor who may want to arrange some tests.

## The most common tests in the Breast Clinic are:

### Mammography

This is an X-ray of the breast. It is most useful for women over the age of 35 years when the breasts are less glandular.

## Fine Needle Aspiration

This is a test in which some cells are removed from the lump using a fine needle. The cells are examined under a microscope. Some bruising may occur.

### Ultrasound

This is a test using sound waves to show up the breast tissue. A small instrument, rather like a microscope, is passed over the breast. Ultrasound is used to confirm whether there is a 'lump' or 'lumpiness'.

This is a useful test for women in all age groups. These tests, together with clinical examination by the doctor, help to decide whether there is single lump or lumpy area in the breast. The difference is important.

## The two most common benign breast lumps are fibroadenomas and cysts.

### Fibroadenoma

A Fibroadenoma is a lump of firm glandular tissue and it usually occurs between the ages of 20 and 40 years.

Fibroadenomas can change their size and shape and will sometimes disappear altogether. Fibroadenomas are very mobile in the breast and that is why they are called 'breast mice'.

Occasionally fibroadenomas can be left, but usually it is recommended that they are removed in women who are over the age of 30 years. This can be done as a day case, usually with a general anaesthetic. A small scar will be left on the breast and this will fade with time. Once the fibroadenoma has been removed it will not come back, but sometimes new ones develop in the same or other breast.

### Cysts

Breast cysts are capsules which contain fluid. If they suddenly appear they can be tender. Cysts are common between the ages of 30 and 50 years and are usually easy to treat. A fine needle is passed into the lump and the fluid is withdrawn. If it is a simple cyst the lump will disappear.

A woman who is prone to cysts may develop them in the future and be treated in the same way. Very occasionally cysts have to be surgically removed or treated with drugs.

Fibroadenomas and cysts are not cancer and do not mean that you are more likely to develop cancer. However, they do not stop a women developing cancer. Women should be 'breast aware' and know what is normal for them.