



# Benign phyllodes tumour



## About this leaflet

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This leaflet tells you about benign phyllodes tumours. It explains what a phyllodes tumour is, how it is diagnosed and what will happen if it needs to be treated or followed-up.

Although more common in women, men can also be affected by benign breast conditions.

## What is a phyllodes tumour?

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The breasts are made up of lobules (milk-producing glands) and ducts (tubes that carry milk to the nipple), which are surrounded by fatty tissue and supportive tissue. Phyllodes tumours are smooth, hard lumps of tissue that can occur anywhere in the breast. Once formed, a phyllodes tumour may grow fairly quickly and can sometimes grow quite large.

Although they can affect a woman at any time in her life, phyllodes tumours are most common in women between 40 and 50 who haven't yet been through the menopause. It's unlikely that more than one will develop at a time, though it is possible.

Phyllodes tumours are rare and are usually benign (non-cancerous). However, they can sometimes be malignant (cancerous). They are grouped into three types:

- benign
- borderline malignant
- malignant.

This leaflet is for anyone with a benign phyllodes tumour. If you have a malignant phyllodes tumour or a borderline malignant phyllodes tumour, your specialist will discuss the most suitable treatment with you. You can also see our **Phyllodes tumours: malignant and borderline malignant** factsheet.

A benign phyllodes tumour can come back after it has been removed, although this is unusual. When a benign phyllodes tumour comes back, in rare cases it can change to being borderline malignant or malignant.

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## How is it diagnosed?

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A phyllodes tumour usually becomes noticeable as a lump in the breast. Once you have been seen and examined by your GP (local doctor), you will be referred to a breast clinic where you'll be seen by a doctor or specialist nurse.

At the breast clinic you will undergo various investigations known as 'triple assessment', so that a definite diagnosis can be made. This assessment consists of:

- a breast examination
- a mammogram (breast x-ray) and/or ultrasound scan (which creates a picture of the breast using high-frequency sound waves)
- a fine needle aspiration (FNA) and/or a core biopsy.

You can read more about these tests in our **Referral to a breast clinic** leaflet.

A fine needle aspiration (FNA) involves a fine needle and syringe being used to take a sample of cells from the lump. More commonly a core biopsy will be taken, which uses a larger needle to remove a sample of breast tissue from the lump. The samples are sent to a laboratory where they are looked at under a microscope to establish a diagnosis.

Sometimes your doctor may also recommend you have a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan which uses radio-frequency waves in a magnetic field to produce detailed pictures of the inside of the breast.

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Phyllodes tumours are complex and may be difficult to diagnose because they can be confused with other breast problems. Sometimes doctors cannot be sure of the diagnosis, even after triple assessment.

Therefore you may need an operation to remove the lump, so that it can be examined by a pathologist to get a definite diagnosis. You can call our free helpline if you'd like more information about any tests you may be having, or see our **Referral to a breast clinic** leaflet.

## Treatment and follow up

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Phyllodes tumours are always treated with surgery. Your specialist will talk to you about the type of surgery you need.

The aim of the surgery is to remove the entire tumour and an area of healthy tissue around it (known as 'clear margins'). It is important to have a clear margin of healthy tissue when the lump is removed, as this reduces the risk of the tumour coming back.

Because phyllodes tumours can sometimes come back, your specialist may want you to have regular follow-up appointments – usually once a year. If your tumour comes back, you'll need to have further surgery. Your specialist will advise you what operation will be best if this happens.

## What this means for you

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You may be anxious about having a benign phyllodes tumour. Even though you may feel relieved that it's a benign condition, you may still worry about it coming back. This is rare, but it is advisable to go to any follow-up appointments you're offered. It's also important to continue to be breast aware and go back to your GP if you notice any other changes.

You can find out more about being breast aware in our **Your breasts your health: throughout your life** booklet.

If you'd like any further information or support, call our free helpline on **0808 800 6000** (Text Relay **18001**). You may also find it helpful to chat to someone who's had a similar experience to you by visiting our online benign breast conditions forum at **[www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)**

A large print version of this leaflet can be downloaded from our website, **[www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)**  
It is also available in Braille or on audio CD on request by phoning **0845 092 0808**.

**This leaflet has been produced by Breast Cancer Care's clinical specialists and reviewed by healthcare professionals.**

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Or to make a donation online using a credit or debit card, please visit

**[www.breastcancercare.org.uk/donate-to-us](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk/donate-to-us)**



Breast Cancer Care is here for anyone affected by breast cancer. We bring people together, provide information and support, and campaign for improved standards of care. We use our understanding of people's experience of breast cancer and our clinical expertise in everything we do.

We promote the importance of early detection of breast cancer and provide accurate answers to questions about breast health. We believe that up-to-date information, based on clinical evidence, builds confidence and helps people take control of their health. Our training, workshops and resources explain how to be breast aware and what changes to look and feel for.

For any breast health concerns, visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk) or call our free helpline on **0808 800 6000** (Text Relay **18001**).

Interpreters are available in any language. Calls may be monitored for training purposes. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Breast Cancer Care.

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