

# Fibroadenoma



## About this leaflet

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This leaflet tells you about fibroadenomas. It explains what a fibroadenoma is, how it's diagnosed and what will happen if it needs to be followed up or treated.

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

## What is a fibroadenoma?

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The breasts are made up of ducts (tubes that carry milk to the nipple) and lobules (milk-producing glands), which are surrounded by fatty tissue and supportive tissue. Sometimes tissue will grow over a lobule like a ball, forming a solid lump. This is a fibroadenoma.

Fibroadenomas are benign (non-cancerous), do not become cancerous and do not increase the risk of developing breast cancer. It is thought that they occur because of increased sensitivity to the female hormone oestrogen.

A fibroadenoma usually has a rubbery texture, is smooth to the touch and moves

easily within the breast. Fibroadenomas are usually painless, but sometimes they may feel tender or even painful.

Fibroadenomas are very common and it is not unusual to have more than one. They often develop during puberty and so are mostly found in young women, although they can occur in women of any age.

Most fibroadenomas are about 1 to 3cm in size and are called simple fibroadenomas. Some can grow to more than 5cm and are called giant fibroadenomas. Fibroadenomas found in teenage girls are called juvenile fibroadenomas, and can also be giant fibroadenomas.

Most fibroadenomas stay the same size. Some get smaller and some eventually disappear over time. A small number of fibroadenomas get bigger, particularly those in teenage girls. Fibroadenomas can also get bigger during pregnancy and breastfeeding. This is quite normal and nothing to worry about.

## How are they diagnosed?

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Fibroadenomas usually become noticeable as a lump in the breast. When you have a breast examination, your GP (local doctor) will sometimes be able to say whether the lump feels like a fibroadenoma. But to make sure, they are likely to refer you to a breast clinic where you'll be seen by specialist doctors or nurses.

At the breast clinic you'll probably have three different tests, known as triple assessment, so that a definite diagnosis can be made. These are:

- 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.

An FNA is where a fine needle and syringe are used to take a sample of cells from the lump. In some clinics you may have a core biopsy rather than an FNA. A core biopsy uses a larger needle to take a sample of tissue from the lump rather than just cells.

If you are under 35, you're more likely to have an ultrasound scan rather than a mammogram. This is because younger women's breast tissue is usually too dense to give a good image on a mammogram and therefore any changes in the breast are difficult to detect.

Fibroadenomas are often easier to identify for women under 25. If you are in this age group, your fibroadenoma may be diagnosed by examination and ultrasound only. However, if there is any uncertainty, an FNA or core biopsy can be done.

Please 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** booklet.

## Follow up or treatment

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In most cases you won't need any follow up or treatment if you have a fibroadenoma. Usually you'll only be asked to go back to your GP or the breast clinic if it gets bigger or you notice a change.

Sometimes surgery is used to remove a fibroadenoma because of its size or because you have requested it.

To remove a fibroadenoma you'll have a small operation using a local or general anaesthetic, and will be in hospital for the day or overnight. You'll have a small temporary wound with stitches in it, and your doctors or nurses will tell you how to care for it afterwards. The operation will leave a small scar but this will fade in time.

Removing a fibroadenoma doesn't usually affect the shape of the breast, as normal breast tissue will fill the space where it used to be, however some women may notice a change or slight indentation around the area removed.

You may also be offered a vacuum assisted biopsy (sometimes called a Mammotome biopsy, which is the brand name of the equipment used). This is a way of removing small fibroadenomas without having surgery. Using a mammogram or ultrasound scan as a guide, small amounts of breast tissue are sucked up through a needle until the lump is seen to disappear. This procedure can cause some bruising and pain for a few days afterwards.

You can call our free helpline if you'd like more information about any treatments you may be having.

## What this means for you

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You may be anxious about what having a fibroadenoma means for you. Even though you may feel relieved that it is a benign condition, you may still worry about breast cancer.

Having a fibroadenoma does not increase your risk of developing breast cancer. However, it is still important to be breast aware and go back to your GP if you notice any further lumps or other changes in your breasts.

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)**

## Notes

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This factsheet can be downloaded from our website, **[www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)** It is also available in Braille on request by phoning **0845 092 0808**.

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

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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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