



Hormonal Breast Pain Patient Information Booklet

Breast pain is a common problem among women, affecting up to 70% of women at some point in their lives. The good news is that most of the time, breast pain is not a sign of cancer. One of the most common causes of breast pain is hormonal changes in the body, which can lead to hormonal breast pain. In this article, we will discuss what hormonal breast pain is, its causes, and how to manage it.

What is hormonal breast pain?

Hormonal breast pain, also known as cyclical breast pain, is breast pain that occurs in a regular pattern that corresponds to the menstrual cycle. This type of pain is usually bilateral, which means it affects both breasts. The pain is often described as a dull ache, heaviness, or soreness, and it typically lasts for a few days to a week before menstruation. It can also occur during ovulation.

What causes hormonal breast pain?

Hormonal breast pain is caused by changes in hormone levels, specifically oestrogen and progesterone. Oestrogen is responsible for breast tissue growth, while progesterone prepares the breast tissue for lactation. During the menstrual cycle, oestrogen levels rise in the first half of the cycle, leading to breast tissue growth. In the second half of the cycle, progesterone levels rise, which can cause breast tissue to swell and become tender.

Hormonal breast pain can also be caused by other factors, such as the formation of breast cysts or fibroadenomas. Breast cysts are fluid-filled sacs that can develop in the breast tissue. They are usually harmless, but they can cause breast pain and discomfort. Fibroadenomas are noncancerous lumps that can develop in the breast tissue. They can also cause breast pain.

How is hormonal breast pain diagnosed?

If you experience breast pain, you should see a healthcare provider to determine the cause of the pain. Your healthcare provider will likely perform a breast exam and may recommend imaging tests, such as a mammogram or ultrasound, to rule out any abnormalities. They may also recommend a breast biopsy if they suspect a lump or other abnormality.

How is hormonal breast pain managed?

The good news is that hormonal breast pain is usually self-limiting and can be managed with simple approaches. Here are some management options:

1. Nutrition: Evening primrose oil (EPO) is a supplement that has been shown to reduce breast pain in some studies. EPO contains gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), which is thought to reduce inflammation in the breast tissue. Other supplements such as vitamin E, vitamin B6, and magnesium may also help.
2. Diet in General: A well-balanced diet is unlikely to relieve breast pain on its own, but it will make a difference. A poor diet will certainly make things worse.

Top Tips:

Choose from a colorful variety of **healthy fats**, **lean protein**, and **complex carbohydrates** as well as the following:

Phytoestrogens - plant compounds with estrogenic properties - have been found to reduce breast pain by up to 44%, depending on the amount consumed.

Examples of these include: Soy, oats, yams, tomatoes, apples

Flax can aid in cyclical breast pain treatment

Vitamins E and B₆ in some studies have been shown to decrease the severity of cyclical breast pain.

Lentils, avocado, spinach, sunflower

3. **Avoiding caffeine:** Caffeine consumption has been linked to breast pain in some studies. It is recommended to limit caffeine intake, including coffee, tea, chocolate, and soda.
4. **Pain relievers:** Over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help relieve breast pain.
5. **Supportive bras:** Wearing a well-fitted, supportive bra can help reduce breast pain and discomfort.
6. **Hormonal therapy:** If breast pain is severe, your healthcare provider may recommend hormonal therapy, such as birth control pills or a progesterone-containing intrauterine device (IUD).

When should I actually seek help or see my GP?

It is important to book in if you experience any of the following:

1. Unusual breast pain or discomfort that is not cyclical
2. Breast pain that is severe or getting worse over time
3. Breast pain that is accompanied by a lump, redness, or swelling
4. Breast pain that affects only one breast.



Dr Shilpa Dave 2023