

# Breast lumps or lumpy breasts?

It's good to understand the difference between lumpy breasts and a breast lump. Breast tissue has a bumpy texture to it, so a lot of women find lumpiness throughout both breasts. This is natural and is no cause for concern. A breast lump will feel harder and unlike the rest of the breast. If you find a lump or notice any change in your breast, you should get it checked out.

## What are lumpy breasts?

Breast lumpiness can feel like anything from a small irregularity to a coarse or nodular breast texture. Some people describe it as ropelike. Breast lumpiness often fluctuates during your menstrual cycle or any time there are changes to your hormone levels. Cyclical lumpiness does not usually need treatment.

In the past, women with lumpy breasts were diagnosed with “fibrocystic disease.” Now we know that this is not a disease but a condition affecting at least half of all women.

## What are breast lumps?

A breast lump feels different than cyclical lumpiness. A lump usually feels more distinct from the tissue around it. When you're able to feel a distinct lump in your breast with your fingers, it's called a palpable lump. These lumps can be nothing at all or turn out to be abnormal, so all lumps should be checked by your doctor.

## What happens if a lump is found?

Your doctor may recommend tests to help diagnose your breast lump. Typically, there are two methods your doctor will use to evaluate the lump—a mammogram or an ultrasound (see back of page).



**Mammogram:**

A metal marker is taped over the area where the lump is felt. The technologist will take special mammography views of the area of interest and surrounding tissue.

**Breast ultrasound:**

If an ultrasound shows a simple cyst, no further treatment is needed. If the lump is suspicious or complex, you may have additional tests like an aspiration, a biopsy or a surgical procedure.

It is very reassuring when the results from your imaging come back as normal, but it is essential for both you and your doctor to continually monitor the lump. Your physician will recommend what your next steps should be.

**What can I do to monitor my breast health?**

Performing a monthly breast self-exam helps you become familiar with the texture and cyclical changes of your breasts, including normal breast lumpiness. These essential exams also help with early detection of a breast lump, which may be a lifesaving discovery. If you're already doing self-exams and getting your mammograms, you're doing a great job being proactive about your health. If you aren't yet, it's never too late to start!



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