



# Breast changes

---

**Your breasts change a lot. This information explains why your breasts change and what changes are common.**

## Why do breasts change?

It's normal for your breasts to change. They might change when:

- you're pregnant
- you're breastfeeding
- your hormones change at different times in your menstrual cycle
- you lose or gain weight
- you get older.

Sometimes, you might feel lumps in your breasts. Your breasts are not muscles. They have milk systems, fat, lymph nodes, veins, nerves and fibrous tissue. Lumps are usually natural and normal.

Normal breast changes usually happen slowly, but sometimes they can happen suddenly.

Breasts are sensitive to hormone changes, like during your menstrual cycle or if you're using hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Hormones called oestrogens increase before your period, causing milk ducts and glands to swell. This might make your breasts feel swollen or lumpy.

In young people, breasts are usually dense because their milk systems might be needed for feeding babies.

Sometimes, this thickness can feel like a lump or a mass of tissue.

As people age, their milk systems shrink and are replaced by fat. By menopause, breasts are completely soft. This can make normal lumps more noticeable.

Breasts can also feel different when you lose or gain weight.

And sometimes they change for no obvious reason.

Your doctor may not always be able to explain why your breasts change. If you feel frustrated, it's important to talk openly about your feelings with your doctor and other supportive people.

Many people have breast changes that are different from their usual hormonal changes. Most of the time, these changes aren't cancer or harmful, but it's important to have a doctor check them to make sure.

## How does the doctor know it's not cancer?

Your doctor will have considered several things:

- your age and family medical history
- the history of the breast change
- results from physical examinations and any other tests like ultrasounds or mammograms
- whether you're still having periods or using HRT.

## What happens now?

The change in your breast doesn't increase your risk of breast cancer.

You should follow the recommended screening for breast cancer based on your age and family history.

Everyone should be aware of unusual changes in their breasts. If you notice any more changes different to your usual hormonal changes, see your doctor.

## Feelings

Having an unusual breast change can be upsetting, bringing up many different feelings and worries. It's common to fear cancer and find tests stressful and invasive.

While most people feel relieved to know that their breast change isn't due to cancer, some may continue to worry.

Changes in your breasts may also affect how you feel about yourself, your sexuality or your relationships.

If your breast change is upsetting, or causing problems in your life, it might help to share your feelings with supportive family or friends.

You can get information or advice from your local doctor (GP) or a Women's Health Nurse at your local Community Health Centre. Talking with a specialist or Breast Care Nurse at a Breast Clinic is also an option.

## You and your General Practitioner (GP)

If you've recently seen a specialist at a Breast Clinic, it's a good idea to follow up with your GP.

This ensures you completely understand the information, tests or diagnosis given by the specialist.

It's also a chance to discuss your thoughts and feelings about your breast change or diagnosis.

Your GP can help you if you'd like a second opinion about your breast change.

If you don't have a regular GP, ask friends, family or your local Community Health Centre for some suggestions.

It's good to have a regular GP who you know and trust.

## Family Violence Support

### 1800 Respect National Helpline

Support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.  
1800 737 732 (24-hour support service)  
1800respect.org.au

## Do you need an interpreter?



Interpreter

If you need an interpreter, you can ask for one.