



PATIENT LEAFLET - BREAST CYST

WHAT IS A BREAST CYST?

Breast cysts are a common cause of a breast lump. They are benign (non-cancerous) lumps. They are spaces filled with fluid that occur in the breast. They are most common in women in their forties and fifties, approaching the menopause, or in women who use HRT after the menopause. Breast cysts can feel soft or hard and can be any size. They can develop quickly and can feel uncomfortable and even painful. However, many women have breast cysts and are completely unaware of them. Most importantly having a breast cyst does NOT increase your risk of subsequent breast cancer.

HOW ARE BREAST CYSTS DIAGNOSED?

In the breast clinic you'll probably have three different tests, known as triple assessment, to help make a diagnosis. These are:

- a breast examination
- a mammogram (breast x-ray) if you are aged 40 or over
- an ultrasound scan (which uses high-frequency sound waves to produce an image)

The diagnosis can be made immediately and you will be seen with and supported by an experienced breast care nurse on the day. She will also be a point of contact should you have any questions later on.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR BREAST CYSTS?

Most cysts don't require any treatment or follow-up, and they often go away by themselves, although they can recur. If the cyst is particularly large or uncomfortable, this can be sometimes be helped by drawing off the fluid using a fine needle and syringe. This is generally well tolerated and only takes a few seconds to do.