

Patient Diagnosis Resource for FIBROADENOMA

Your Diagnosis

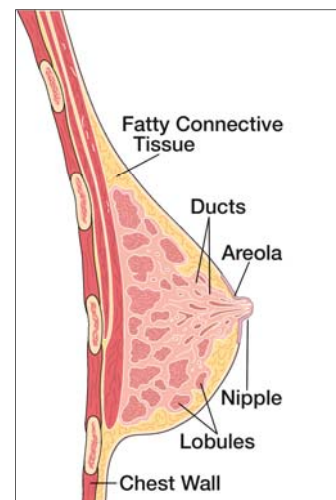
Your doctor has determined that you have a fibroadenoma, which is a benign, or non-cancerous, growth within the breast. Fibroadenomas are among the most common of all breast tumors. They occur frequently in women younger than age 40 but can arise at any age.

About the Condition

The breast is comprised of 2 main types of tissue — glandular and supportive. The glandular portion includes the lobules, which produce milk in women who are breastfeeding, and the ducts, which carry milk from the lobules to the nipple. The supportive portion includes the fibrous connective tissue and fatty tissue that determine the size and shape of the breast. Any of the tissues of the breast can experience symptom-causing changes, which may be either benign or cancerous.

Fibroadenomas are benign, or harmless, tumors comprised of both glandular and supportive breast tissue. Their actual cause is not known, but the use of birth control pills before the age of 20 is linked with their development. They are usually single round, easily moveable lumps that feel firm or rubbery with distinct borders. Some 10–15% of women with fibroadenomas have several lumps, which may affect one or both breasts.

Classified as simple or complex, fibroadenomas range in size from microscopically small to several inches in diameter. Most are simple fibroadenomas, which generally look consistent when examined under a microscope and do not increase the risk for breast cancer. Complex fibroadenomas contain additional components that are seen when they are examined microscopically, such as calcifications (tiny mineral deposits). Women who have multiple or complex fibroadenomas have a slightly increased risk (1½–2 times higher) of developing breast cancer.



During pregnancy or hormone replacement, fibroadenomas usually grow quite quickly. They often get smaller or disappear on their own after menopause. In general about half of all fibroadenomas will disappear within 5 years; the other half will either get larger or remain the same size.

Treatment Options

Treatment for fibroadenomas may not be necessary unless they are large, painful or cosmetically undesirable, in which case they can be removed.

Fibroadenomas do not grow back after they are removed; however, some women develop new fibroadenomas after having previous lumps removed.

The following treatment possibilities are available:

Watchful Waiting – Fibroadenomas may be left in place and monitored for growth. Women with multiple non-growing lumps may choose this tactic because removal would affect the shape of the breast.

Excision – Cutting out fibroadenomas with a scalpel, or traditional excision, is a treatment method used in some cases.

Percutaneous Excision – Sometimes fibroadenomas are removed by percutaneous, or through the skin, excision. With this method, a small slit is made in the skin near the lump and an ultrasound-guided probe with a vacuum is used to extract the fibroadenoma in sections.

Cryoablation – Another treatment method used for some fibroadenomas is cryoablation, which destroys the lumps by freezing them without removing them. An ultrasound-guided probe is placed into the center of the lump through a small incision in the skin to perform the procedure.

Women with fibroadenomas may need to be followed regularly by their doctors through clinical breast exams and imaging tests such as mammograms (breast X-rays) or ultrasound if the lumps are left in place or if they have multiple or complex lumps that increase the risk for breast cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS) general recommendations for early breast cancer detection, women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam by a health professional as part of their regular health exams, preferably every 3 years. The ACS recommends that women age 40 and older have a mammogram and a clinical breast exam each year.

What You Can Do

Steps you can take to maximize your health and reduce the risk of developing breast or other types of cancer include:

- ◆ Burning up all of the calories you take in each day through healthy eating and regular exercise
- ◆ Minimizing stress by getting enough sleep every night and using relaxation techniques
- ◆ Cutting out the use of tobacco and limiting your alcohol consumption
- ◆ Visiting your doctor regularly and promptly reporting breast changes or symptoms that develop

You can also perform a breast self-exam once a month, which has been shown to play a small role in finding breast cancer and is recommended by the ACS for women age 20 and older. These exams help you know how your breasts look and feel normally, so you can more easily notice any unusual changes and report them promptly to your doctor. Talk with your doctor about the best techniques to use during breast self-exam, or visit the American Cancer Society and Susan G. Komen Websites listed below for more details.

Additional Resources

American Cancer Society, 800.227.2345, www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute, 800.422.6237, www.cancer.gov

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, 800.462.9273, www.komen.org

This patient resource sheet is provided to you as a service of CBLPath® and is intended for information purposes only. It is not meant to serve as medical advice or a substitute for professional medical care. Treatment options may vary, and only you and your physician can determine your best treatment plan.