

Breast Unit

Patient information leaflet

Name of leaflet: **Breast pain**

A large number of women seek help and advice about breast pain. Breast pain is rarely associated with breast cancer and this can be excluded by breast examination and further investigation if needed.

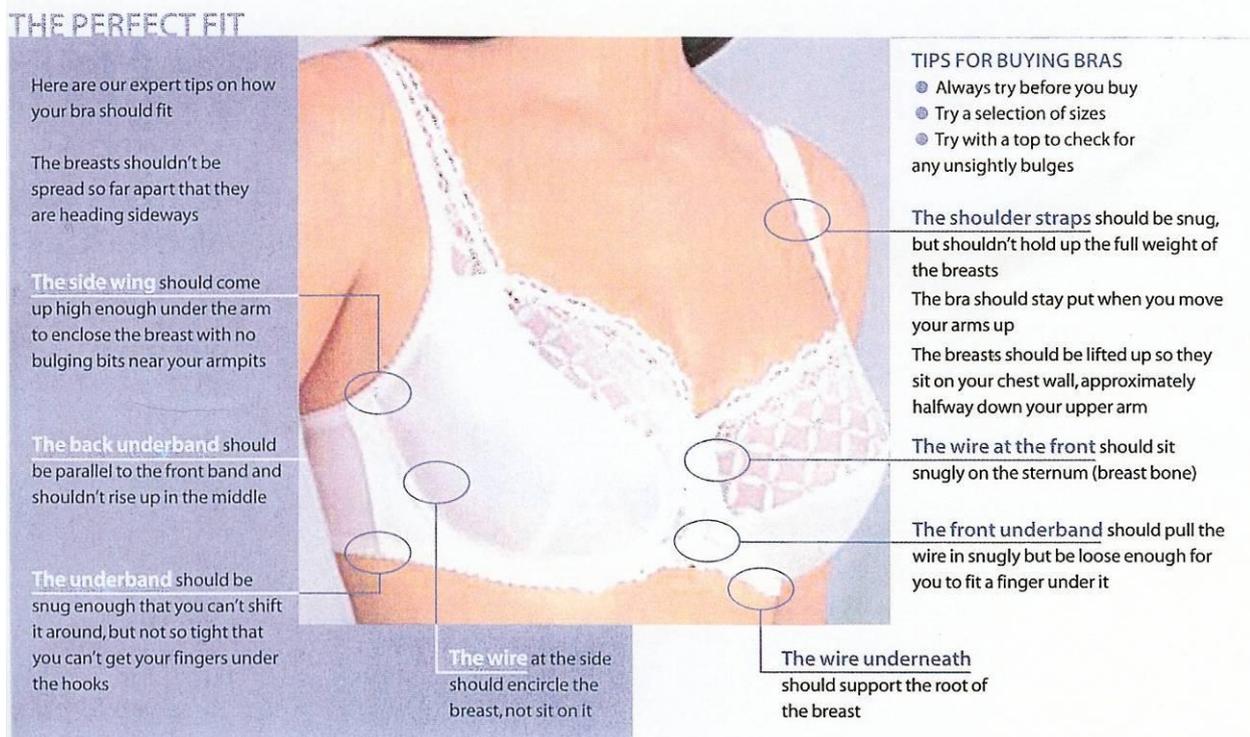
Breast pain most often occurs cyclically – that is with your monthly cycle. Pain can occur a few days or as much as three weeks before your period. This is most common in women in their 20's and 30's.

Non-cyclical breast pain can occur at any time of your monthly cycle, this is more common in women over 30.

Once examined and reassured that there is no evidence of cancer in their breast, some women are able to cope with their pain by taking occasional painkillers such as paracetamol, at the recommended doses.

All women will be helped by wearing a good-fitting firm supportive bra. You may even find that you require different sized bras at different time of your cycle.

You can be measured for a correctly fitting bra at any department store with a lingerie department. Some women find that wearing a soft bra or 'crop top' at night is also helpful.



SIGNS THAT YOUR BRA DOESN'T FIT

Shoulder straps cut in The shoulders are taking too much weight. The bra may be too big around the chest, or the underband too loose. In some cases, the shoulder strap itself may not be long enough to adjust low enough

Underband rises up your back The band isn't tight enough or the chest size is too big

Breast spills out at the side The cup is probably too small. Check whether the side wing and cup are high enough to enclose the breast. You might need a different style

Wire digs in to your arm The wire may have become overstretched or mangled by washing, and could be poking through the fabric. The fabric at the side may have lost some elasticity and no longer be holding the wire into the body. If tightening the back doesn't help, you may need a new bra. In some cases, the wire may be too long

Wire digs in to your breast The back underband might not be tight enough – try moving it up a hook. It's also possible that the side wings aren't deep enough, so the tension from the back can't open the wire up. Go for a bra that's wider at the side with a thicker back band

Bra moves up when you raise your arms The underband is too loose or the chest size is too big

The cup is baggy The cup is probably too big, though it also might not be a good style for you. Remember to try going up a chest size as well as down a cup size to see if you get a better fit

The cup puckers If the cup puckers at the nipple, the underband is too loose, meaning there's not enough tension to pull the cup tight



Shoulder straps fall down

Try adjusting the straps. Remember that one shoulder may be lower than the other and straps stretch with time. All styles are different so you could try a style where the strap joins towards the middle of the cup

Breast peeks over the top at the front The cup is probably

too small. If you have larger breasts, the style of the bra might also be too skimpy

Wire doesn't sit flat at the front The cup is probably too small so the wire can't be pulled down completely. Try a bigger cup and smaller chest size. The tension of the front underband might be too soft, so you could try a bra with stiffer fabric

Breast pokes out at the bottom
The underband is too big and the cup is too small

LOOKING AFTER YOUR BRA

- Wash it by hand. Washing machines can mangle or dislodge the wire
- The underband stretches as a bra is washed and worn, so move the hook to a higher setting after a few weeks and check whether shoulder straps need tightening, too
- Don't expect a bra you machine-wash and wear several times a week to last more than a few months – particularly if it's made of flimsy fabric

It is thought that breast pain is caused by high levels of certain unusual fats in the blood which make your breast more sensitive to the normal levels of hormones. Women with breast pain have been found to have low levels of an unsaturated fat called gamma-linolenic acid in their blood.

One way of treating breast pain is by taking gamma-linolenic acid by mouth, as Oil of Evening Primrose 500mg capsules or Starflower Oil. These are available from any health food store or supermarket. You will need to take a dose of 3 capsules twice a day and persevere with the treatment as it may take up to 6 months to give you full benefit. You can then either stop the treatment or continue at a lower dose. Oil of Evening Primrose and Starflower Oil have few, if any side effects. Rarely women have reported nausea, indigestion and headaches. It is best to take the capsules with a meal.

People with epilepsy are generally advised not to take Oil of Evening Primrose or Starflower Oil.

It may help to monitor your pain if you fill in a breast pain diary which records the severity of your pain and its relationship with your menstrual cycle.

If Oil of Evening Primrose does not help after 6 months then we will discuss other forms of treatment with you.

Contact details

If you have any specific concerns that you feel have not been answered and need explaining, please contact the following.

- Breast Care Nurse Worcester Royal Hospital (phone 01905 760261)
- Breast Care Nurse Kidderminster Hospital (phone 01562 512373)
- Breast Care Nurse Alexandra Hospital (phone 01527 503030)

Other information

The following internet websites contain information that you may find useful.

- www.worcestershirehealth.nhs.uk/acute_trust
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- www.patient.co.uk
Information fact sheets on health and disease
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
On-line health encyclopaedia

Patient Services Department

It is important that you speak to the department you have been referred to (see the contacts section) if you have any questions (for example, about medication) before your investigation or procedure.

If you have any concerns about your treatment, you can contact the Patient Services Department on 0300 123 1733. The Patient Services staff will be happy to discuss your concerns and give any help or advice.

If you have a complaint and you want it to be investigated, you should write direct to the Chief Executive at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester WR5 1DD or contact the Patient Services Department for advice.

Please contact Patient Services on 0300 123 1733 if you would like this leaflet in another language or format (such as Braille or easy read).

Bengali

“আপনি যদি এই লিফলেটটি বিকল্প কোনো ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে (যেমন ব্রেইল বা সহজ পাঠ) চান, তাহলে এই নম্বরে 0300 123 1733 প্যাশেন্ট সার্ভিসের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।”

Urdu

“اگر آپ کو یہ دستی اشتہار کسی متبادل زبان یا ساخت میں چاہیے (جیسے کہ بریل / ایزی ریڈ) تو پیشینہ سروسز سے 0300 123 1733 پر رابطہ کریں۔”

Portuguese

“Por favor, contacte os Serviços de Apoio ao Paciente através do número 0300 123 1733, caso precise deste folheto numa língua alternativa ou formato (como Braille / fácil de ler).”

Polish

"Jeżeli pragniecie Państwo otrzymać tę broszurę w innym języku lub formacie (Braille / duży druk) proszę skontaktować się z Obsługą Pacjentów pod numerem 0300 123 1733."

Chinese

"如果您需要此份傳單的其他語言選擇或其他版本

(如盲人點字版/易讀版容易的閱讀),請致電 0300 123 1733 與病患服務處聯繫。"

Comments

We would value your opinion on this leaflet, based on your experience of having this procedure done. Please put any comments in the box below and return them to the Clinical Governance Department, Finance Department, Worcestershire Royal Hospital, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester, WR5 1DD.

Name of leaflet: _____ Date: _____

Comments:

Thank you for your help.

REFERENCE

Bra fitting instructions – 'The Perfect Fit' - Which Magazine 01 September 2004