

What tests might I need to investigate breast changes?

If you or your GP have found a change in your breast, there are a number of steps to help find the cause of your breast change.

These can include:

1. a clinical breast examination,
2. questions about your breast changes and family history,
3. imaging tests, including mammography and/or ultrasound of your breast/s, which are checked by a radiologist, and
4. a biopsy, where a sample of your breast tissue is taken from the area and checked.

Not everyone will need all these tests to find the cause of their breast changes. It is important, however, to continue to investigate your breast changes until a cause is found and confirmed by tests.

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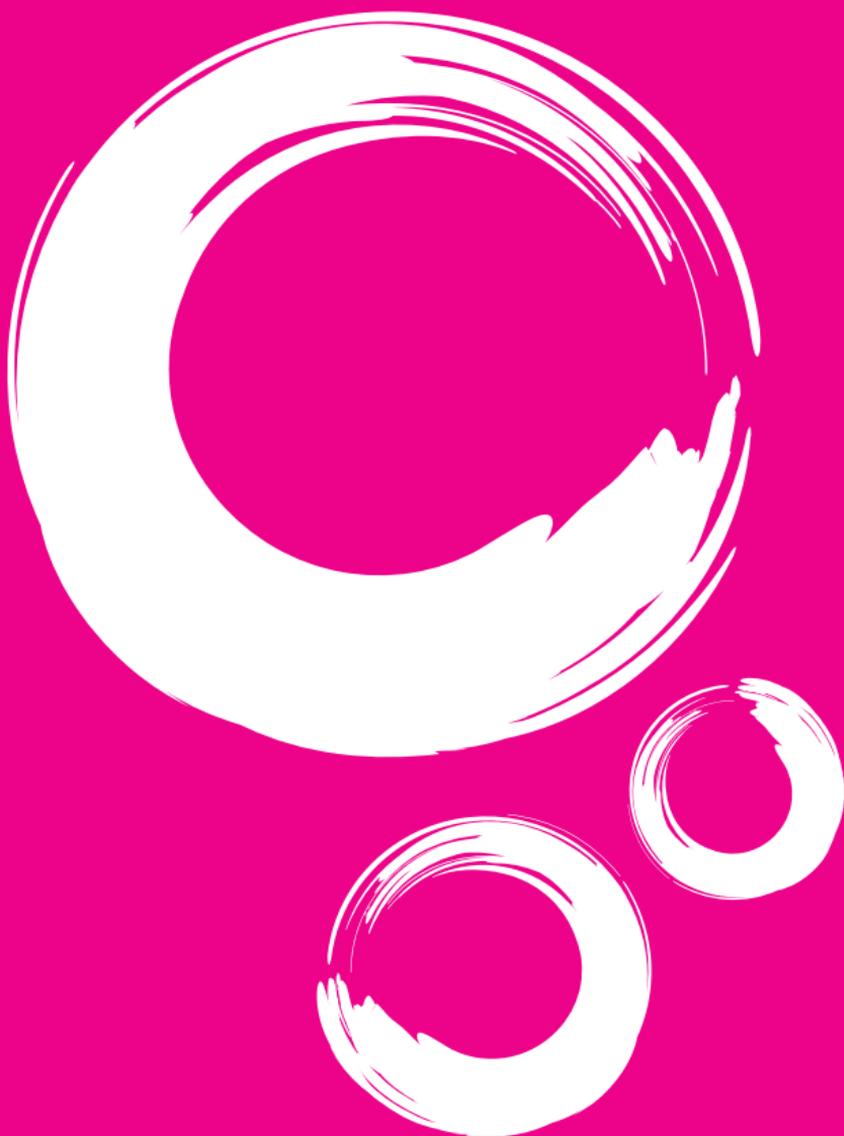
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Breast Changes



BreastScreen ACT



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Breast changes don't necessarily mean you have a serious medical problem. However, if you have any symptoms, get them checked by your GP without delay.

What can cause breast changes?

- **Hormonal changes** – may cause swollen, tender or lumpy breasts at times during your menstrual cycle, or if you are taking hormonal treatments for contraception or hormone replacement therapy (HRT).
- **Fibroadenoma** – is a smooth, firm moveable lump made up of fibrous and glandular tissue. This is a non-cancerous breast tumour. This type of lump is more commonly found when you are younger, but you can develop this at any age. Tests should be taken to investigate any lump. If the tests show that the lump is a fibroadenoma, you will not usually need treatment unless it continues to increase in size or change shape.
- **Cysts** – are fluid filled sacs commonly found in women aged 35-50 years or women taking HRT. Cysts are non-cancerous and don't usually need treatment, however if your cyst is painful or forms a lump which can be felt, the fluid within the cyst can be drained.
- **Breast cancer** – is when abnormal cells in the breast multiply and form a tumour. More than 75% of breast cancer occurs in women aged 50 and over.¹

1. *About Breast Cancer, Cancer Screening, Department Of Health, Australian Government.*

Changes to take notice of include:

- a lump, lumpiness or thickening of skin
- changes to your nipple, such as a change in shape, crusting, a sore or an ulcer, redness, unusual discharge, or your nipple turning inwards (inverted) when it hasn't in the past
- changes to the skin of your breast, such as dimpling, unusual redness or other colour changes
- an increase or decrease in the size of your breast
- swelling or discomfort in your armpit
- persistent unusual pain in one breast only that is not related to your normal monthly menstrual cycle and stays once your period is finished.

If you have an unusual change in your breast talk to your GP.

Your GP may:

- examine your breasts, and/or
- refer you for tests.

If you are experiencing an unusual change in your breast such as a lump or nipple discharge, see your GP for an examination and possible referral to a diagnostic centre.

It is common to experience breast changes and most of these are not breast cancer.