



Let's talk about breast pain

When women come to MIC Medical Imaging for breast imaging, they often have questions for our technologists and radiologists about breast pain. This is a very common concern and there are some simple explanations. In all but a very few cases, breast pain is not caused by cancer.

We encourage you to read through this brochure and visit MyHealthAlberta.ca—a good source of information which includes a calendar you can use to keep track of your breast pain. Your healthcare practitioner can help assess your pain and suggest ways to manage your symptoms.

Your choice for breast imaging

MIC Medical Imaging offers breast imaging using the most advanced technologies at clinics throughout the Edmonton area. To book your appointment at a location near you, contact us at:



Central Booking

Ph: 780.450.1500

1.800.355.1755

Fax: 780.450.9551

When you call, please have available:

- Your Alberta Health Care Insurance card.
- Your requisition form with your healthcare practitioner's instructions.

Note: MIC accepts all diagnostic imaging requisitions.



mic.ca



Breast Pain

What you need to know



Breast pain

If you have breast tenderness and/or pain, also known as mastalgia, you are experiencing one of the most common breast problems. You may notice it at the same time as your monthly period (cyclical) or it may not follow any pattern (non-cyclical).

The pain can worsen with hormonal changes, the medicine you take, or the amount of stress in your life. And, you are more likely to experience breast pain before you go through menopause.

70%

Breast pain affects up to 70 percent of women at some point in their lifetime.

Cyclical breast pain

This is the most common type of breast pain and may be caused by monthly hormonal changes when you get your period. The pain feels like a heaviness or soreness in both breasts that radiates to the armpit and arm.

Cyclic breast pain occurs more often in younger women and is usually most severe before your period starts. Most cyclic pain goes away without treatment and usually disappears at menopause.

Non-cyclical breast pain

This is a less common type of breast pain. Women experiencing this type of pain describe it as a sharp, continuous, burning pain in a specific area of their breast. The pain is not caused by monthly hormonal changes and may occur in only one breast.

Women who have non-cyclic breast pain are usually 30-50 years of age. Sometimes non-cyclic pain is caused by a fibroadenoma or a cyst. If your healthcare practitioner can identify the cause, they may be able to treat the pain.



Does breast pain indicate breast cancer?

Breast pain is generally not a symptom of breast cancer. However, in rare cases, painful lumps may be caused by breast cancer.

Chest wall pain

Chest wall pain (also called musculoskeletal pain) is found in the muscles and bones of the chest and may be mistaken for breast pain. If you have chest wall pain, you may find:

- The pain can be felt on either or both sides of the chest and can spread out from the armpit.
- Physical activity can make the pain worse.
- This pain often goes away in time.

You should ask your healthcare practitioner to evaluate your chest wall pain. This is very important if you have a history of trauma or surgery in the area or a heart condition.

Assessing your breast pain

You should discuss your symptoms with your healthcare practitioner if your breast pain:

- Lasts longer than three weeks.
- Is in one area of the breast.
- Is getting worse, affecting your everyday activities or waking you up at night.

To assess your breast pain, your practitioner will ask you about your breast health and family history, and then examine your breasts. They may also send you for a mammogram and/or an ultrasound to look for the cause of the pain (such as a cyst). It's important to tell your practitioner where the pain is, how much pain you're having, and how long the pain lasts.

Relieving breast pain

You may be able to relieve breast pain by:

- Eating a low-fat diet with more whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Reducing your salt intake.
- Reducing the amount of caffeine you consume.
- Wearing a well-fitted, supportive bra.
- Taking magnesium supplements two weeks before your period starts.

If these suggestions don't work for you, there are other options you can discuss with your healthcare practitioner. These include:

- Reviewing your prescription for birth control pills (oral contraceptives).
- Adjusting hormone replacement therapy.
- Draining fluid-filled cysts.
- Pain relief or anti-inflammatory medication.

➤ To learn more, visit [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca)