

Referral Support Service

Breast

BO6 Mastalgia / Breast Pain

Definition

Unilateral or bilateral breast pain without any associated symptoms.
Cyclical breast pain is related to the menstrual cycle and is not associated with specific underlying breast disease. It affects up to two thirds of women and one in ten experiences moderate to severe symptoms.

Exclude Red Flag Symptoms

- If associated breast lump follow **breast lump pathway**.
- If associated nipple discharge follow **nipple discharge pathway**.
- If associated nipple distortion/ retraction follow **nipple changes pathway**.
- If evidence of inflammation consider the possibility of inflammatory cancer and refer as **Fast Track** if necessary, or the possibility of evolving abscess in which case follow **Breast Infection Pathway**

General Points

How many consultations the patient has had for this condition in the last 6 months

Management

- Reassurance that there is no underlying disease may be all that is required. (Studies identify no increased risk of breast cancer in women with breast pain)
- Check for any medication that could be a contributing cause (e.g. hormonal treatments, antidepressants, anxiolytics and antipsychotics such as **sertraline**, **venlafaxine** and **haloperidol**, anti hypertensive and cardiac medication such as **spironolactone**, **methyldopa** and **minoxidil** and antimicrobials including **ketoconazole** and **metronidazole**).
- Consider
 - a better fitting bra during the day
 - a soft supporting bra worn at night
 - topical NSAID as required
 - oral paracetamol or ibuprofen as required
 - issue breast pain leaflet or link
 - consider Starflower Oil Capsules (patient should purchase, do not prescribe) for at least 3 months and reduction of caffeine intake (there is no evidence base for

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this but local experience suggests it can be helpful)
- ask woman to keep a pain chart to help assess the benefits of treatment.

In general continue treatment for 6 months before considering referral for second line treatments.

- Smoking cessation to be encouraged
- Weight loss (if appropriate) to be encouraged

Referral Information

Information to include in referral letter

- History and duration of complain.
- Outline treatments already advised and tried.
- Family history of breast cancer.
- Relevant past medical / surgical history
- Current regular medication
- BMI/ Smoking status

Investigations prior to referral

Pain chart

Patient Information Leaflets/ PDAs

www.patient.co.uk/health/breast-pain

References

- NICE Clinical Knowledge Summaries
- CRUK Guidelines For Referral of Patients with Breast Symptoms
- SIGN Guideline 84: Management of Breast Cancer in Women