

Oncologist-approved cancer information from the American Society of Clinical Oncology

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Printed March 12, 2014 from http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/breast-cancer/symptoms-and-signs

Breast Cancer - Symptoms and Signs

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [1], January / 2013

Symptoms and Signs

Women with breast cancer may experience breast changes or symptoms, but many women do not show any of these signs or symptoms when diagnosed. Many times, breast signs or symptoms can be caused by a medical condition that is not cancer. If you are concerned about a sign or symptom, please talk with your doctor.

The signs and symptoms that should be discussed with a doctor include:

- · Lumps that feel like a hard knot (many women normally have lumpy breasts) or a thickening in the breast or under the arm
- · Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Nipple tenderness, discharge (may occur suddenly, be bloody, or occur in only one breast), or physical changes (such as a nipple turned inward or a persistent sore)
- Skin irritation or changes, such as puckers, dimples, scaliness, or new creases
- Warm, red, swollen breasts with or without a rash resembling the skin of an orange (called peau d'orange)
- Pain in the breast (usually not a symptom of breast cancer, but it should be reported to a doctor), particularly breast pain that doesn?t go away

Your doctor will ask you questions about the symptoms you are experiencing to help find out the possible cause of the problem, which can help the doctor know what tests are needed to make a <u>diagnosis</u> [2]. Questions may include how long you?ve been experiencing the symptom(s) and how often.

If cancer is diagnosed, relieving any symptoms of the cancer and side effects from cancer treatment is an important part of cancer care and treatment. This may also be called symptom management, supportive care, or palliative care. Be sure to talk with your health care team about symptoms you experience, including any new symptoms or a change in symptoms.

Links

[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us

[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/18624