

Education

Breast Cyst Drainage

What is breast cyst drainage?

Breast cyst drainage is a procedure in which your health care provider drains a cyst in your breast.

When is it used?

This procedure may be done when you have a cyst that is causing discomfort or concern. The cyst may show up on your mammogram. It may make it more difficult for you and your provider to feel the area behind the cyst during a breast exam. After your provider drains the cyst, your breast should feel better and be easier to examine. In addition, your provider may send the fluid to the lab for tests.

Examples of alternatives are:

- to have the cyst removed surgically
- to choose not to have treatment, recognizing the risks of your condition.

You should ask your provider about these choices.

How do I prepare for breast cyst drainage?

No particular preparation is necessary.

What happens during the procedure?

You may be given a local anesthetic. A local anesthetic numbs the skin and tissue near the cyst. You will feel some mild stinging while the anesthetic is being given, but it should help keep you from feeling pain during the procedure.

Your provider will place a needle into the cyst in your breast and remove the fluid. It is unusual for this fluid to need any further testing, but if your provider feels it is important, it can be sent to a lab for tests. Breast cysts are very common, but it is rare for one to contain cancer cells.

What happens after the procedure?

A small bandage may be placed on the needle site. You may feel and see a little bruising in the area. Sometimes the cyst will refill with fluid.

If the fluid from the cyst was tested, you can call your health care provider in a few days to get the results. Ask your provider what other steps you should take and when you need to come back for a checkup.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

The cyst may stop causing you discomfort. Your provider will be able to make a more accurate diagnosis about the cyst. It will be easier to check your breast when the cyst is gone.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- A local anesthetic may not numb the area quite enough and you may feel some minor discomfort. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the drug used in this type of anesthesia.
- You may have infection or bleeding at the site.

You should ask your health care provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You have a lot of drainage from the puncture site.
- You develop a fever.

Call during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.

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