



"A Partner in Breast Health"

What is a Cyst?



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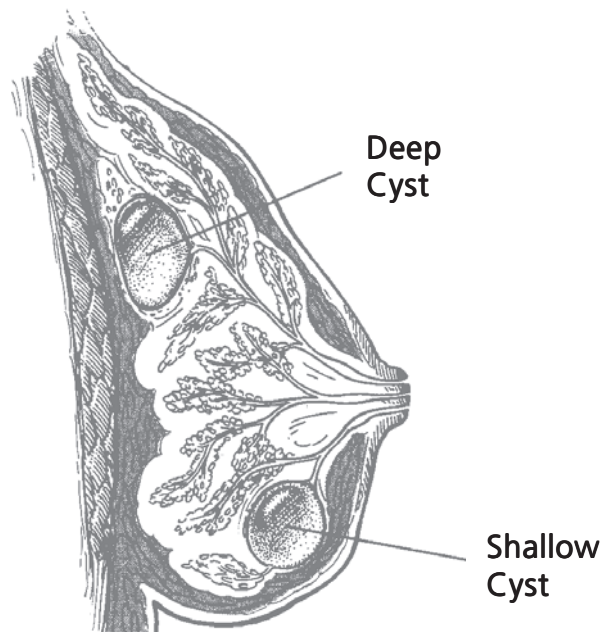
An Ontario Breast Screening Program Affiliate

What is a Cyst?

A cyst is a fluid filled sac which typically occurs in women from their mid-thirties to their mid-fifties. It is a benign process which is not harmful to women. Cysts can appear quite suddenly and are often tender. They may present as a lump in a woman's breast.

Why do Cysts Occur?

As women age, the secretions normally found in the ducts of the breast become thicker. The narrow walls of the ducts may then block. As fluid builds up, the walls of the duct expand to form a round smooth sac.



How are Cysts Treated?

It is not necessary to aspirate all cysts, as they are harmless. Cysts can be treated by having the fluid aspirated or withdrawn with a small needle. Usually the cyst will then collapse and disappear. This provides confirmation that it is indeed a cyst. The fluid can range in colour from green to milky brown. A decision to aspirate is often made after a discussion between the physician and the patient.

Some women may have one or two cysts in their lifetime while other women may develop many. Cysts do not put women at a higher risk for breast cancer. Any lump that a woman finds in her breast should always be investigated by a physician.



If you have other questions or concerns that have not been answered here, please feel free to ask our staff.