

## Fibrocystic Breast

Fibrocystic Breast Disease is the medical term used to describe a non-cancerous, condition of the breast characterized by lumpiness and tenderness of one or both breasts. This condition is more commonly observed in women of reproductive age or women who take estrogen replacement therapy. Breast tissue is greatly influenced by circulating female hormone levels. Symptoms are usually cyclic and tend to worsen right before the menstrual period.

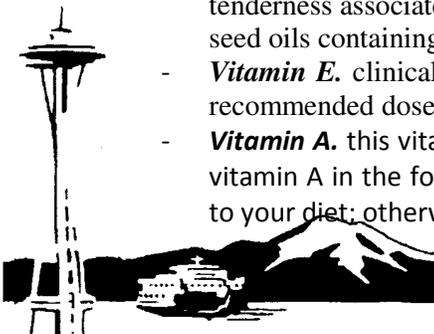
## Fibrocystic Breast and Iodine

A relationship between low iodine levels and breast nodules has been proposed based on results from human and animal studies. It has been found that breast tissue has an affinity for both thyroid hormone and iodine. When iodine in the body is deficient, the breast tissue becomes more sensitive to estrogen stimulation resulting in swollen and tender breasts. Your iodine levels can be tested with a 24 hour urine collection kit offered here at Emerald City Clinic.

Emerald City Naturopathic Clinic iodine recommendations for the treatment of fibrocystic breast include the use of a topical 5% Lugol's Iodine solution applied daily to the affected breast areas for one week followed by one week without iodine application. This treatment should be followed alternating one week on the iodine solution and one week off until the breast nodules improve. It is important to begin the application of the iodine solution during the week prior to when menstruation is expected, to address the lumps and improve treatment outcomes. A few drops of 5% topical iodine applied directly to the skin with a clean cotton ball is all you need.

## Other Important Treatment Considerations:

- **Eat a wholesome foods** diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- **Include more soy containing products in your diet** (e.g. soy milk, soy yogurt, tofu, tempeh, edamame, soybean sprouts, miso, etc.). Soy is a natural source of phytoestrogens, plant-derived molecules that resemble human estrogen, that have been shown to reduce breast tenderness.
- **Decrease dietary fats**, particularly saturated animal fat, which can contribute to the elevated levels of circulating estrogen in the body.
- **Support liver function** to allow your body to metabolize estrogen more efficiently and effectively by:
  - Eating more beets, leafy greens (kale, collard greens, etc.), artichokes, Brussels sprouts, broccoli cabbage, garlic, and onions
  - Promote proper waste elimination through the bowel; stay hydrated and increase your intake of dietary fiber.
  - Take probiotics, specifically strains of *Lactobacillus acidophilus*; they have been shown to improve bowel function as well as promote estrogen detoxification and excretion.
  - Avoid alcohol; it overworks your liver and slows down the metabolism of estrogen.
  - Include liver-friendly botanicals such as milk thistle, burdock root, dandelion root, celandine, and fringe tree in the form of tea or capsules.
- **Remove caffeine and sources of Methylxanthines from your diet.** These are found in coffee, tea, chocolate, and cola as well as caffeinated medications and contain an enzyme that blocks the breakdown of Estrogen. All these have been shown to worsen breast pain, swelling, and discomfort.
- **Poke root (*Phytolacca americana*)** has been traditionally used by naturopaths to reduce breast tenderness and swelling. This herb can be found in oil or tincture preparations and can be applied directly onto breasts.
- **Nutritional Supplements:**
  - **Evening Primrose oil**, a great source of Omega-6 oils, has shown to diminish breast pain and tenderness associated with menstrual cycles. The recommended dose is 1,500 mg twice daily. Other seed oils containing GLA include flaxseed oil, black currant oil, and borage oil.
  - **Vitamin E.** clinical studies have shown that vitamin E can reduce breast pain and tenderness. The recommended dose is 400 – 800 IU daily.
  - **Vitamin A.** this vitamin has also been shown to improve breast tenderness. Adequate amounts of vitamin A in the form of carotene can be obtained by adding more yellow, orange, and red foods to your diet; otherwise, it can be supplemented in doses of 50,000 IU daily.



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