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Breast Cysts

**Specialist Breast Care Service
Ulster Hospital**

Breast Cysts

Today you have had a cyst in your breast drained. This leaflet is designed to help you understand a little about cysts.

What are cysts and where do they come from?

A cyst is a swelling with fluid in it.

Cysts are formed from the milk ducts in the breast. There may be several cysts anywhere in either breast, but usually only one or two swell to reach a size where they can be felt. We do not know exactly why they form. They can form in any part of either breast, and can occur at any age, but are commonest between the ages of 30 and 55. Some women seem much more prone to develop cysts than others.

A cyst hardly ever means anything serious. However, like all swellings in the breast a cyst should to be assessed.

How do cysts show themselves?

Cysts often appear suddenly, even quite big ones. They are sometimes painful. We usually diagnose a cyst by removing fluid

with a syringe, or occasionally we discover them on breast ultrasound scans or mammograms.

After your cyst has been drained we may arrange for you to have a mammogram (breast X-ray) or ultrasound scan especially if you are aged 45 or over.

What does the fluid in a cyst look like?

Do not be alarmed about the colour of the fluid. Shades of green, brown, and even black are quite normal. A cyst formed during breast-feeding usually contains milky fluid.

After the needle test there may be some brownish bruising of the skin for a week or so. The bruising can cause some thickening where the cyst was.

If the same cyst refills, we draw the fluid out again. If it continues to fill, we may suggest that you have the cyst removed by a small operation. We will discuss this with you.

Will I get more cysts?

There is a fifty per cent chance that you will notice one or more cysts at some time in

the future. Each time you should have the swelling examined by your doctor. He may refer you back to hospital.

Does HRT cause cysts?

There does seem to be some connection between cysts and Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). If you are having a lot of problems with cysts it may help to change the particular pill or patch you are using. Your general practitioner (GP) will be able to offer you advice.