Benign Breast Disease

What is benign breast disease?
Most breast problems, including cysts, especially in younger women, are benign (not cancer). The most common breast problem is a benign condition called fibrocystic changes. Fibrocystic changes (which may include large cysts) nodular fibroglandular tissue, and fibroadenomas (solid marble-like lumps) are all examples of benign breast disease. These lumps are not caused by cancer. However, examination of any discrete lump by your primary care physician is important to help you determine if further evaluation is needed.

What are the symptoms?
- Symptoms of fibrocystic change include pain and tenderness, usually in both breasts. However, some women with fibrocystic changes experience no pain but notice lumps or nodules within the breast.

- In some women, one or both breasts may develop lumps and become most tender 7 - 14 days before the start of each menstrual period. Breast pain occurs most often in the upper, outer part of the breast.

- Persistent breast pain should be brought to the attention of your provider. Most women will experience relief from their breast pain with treatment.

When is the best time to schedule my breast exam?
It is best to have your breasts examined one week following the end of your menstrual period. If you are no longer menstruating, this will not apply to you.
When should I see my doctor?
You should see your doctor if you have breast pain that is not cyclical or that is localized. All definite lumps or masses should be examined by your primary care physician.

What is the treatment?
- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs** (NSAIDS) like ibuprofen relieve pain and also inflammation. You may be asked to take this medication for a period of time.  
  Topical NSAIDS, such as diclofenac sodium gel, may help reduce breast pain with less likelihood of side effects than with oral NSAIDS.
- **Clothing modification:** a well-fitted, supportive bra can significantly reduce breast pain.
- **Evening primrose oil** 1000mg 2 - 3 times per day is often helpful.
- **Persistent breast pain unresponsive to the above treatment** may prompt your doctor to refer you to a breast specialist. S/he may prescribe hormonal therapies for severe breast pain, though they have more potential adverse side effects.

Call the office if you have any new concerns of questions, call the clinic and talk to a nurse or your clinician.