

Title: There's a Lump in My Breast...Now What?

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Abstract: When a patient finds a breast lump either accidentally or by breast self exam, there are many different imaging modalities and/or invasive procedures that may be done to determine if breast disease is present. This pamphlet describes many of the possible options a patient and physician may face to "work-up" a breast lump.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

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- When you or your doctor finds a lump in your breast, the next step may be a simple follow-up exam to check on its growth, or you and your doctor may decide to take a closer look with one of the following:
 - **Ultrasound:** This type of imaging can tell you if the lump you feel is solid or a cyst. Best for younger women or those with dense breasts.
 - **Mammogram:** Your doctor may be able to mark the lump you feel so that the area can be looked at on a mammogram. It can also be used to look at the surrounding breast and make sure it appears normal.
 - **MRI:** If you have breast implants or for any reason cannot undergo ultrasound or mammogram, your doctor may recommend a breast MRI. MRI is very good at detecting cancer, but also gives a lot of “false positives.”

- *Or you and your doctor may decide to get a sample of the lump with one of the following:*
 - ***Fine-needle Aspiration (FNA):*** *A very small needle is used to pull fluid or tissue from the lump for testing. The lump may disappear after this is done and if so, you may not need any more testing.*
 - ***Core-needle Biopsy:*** *After numbing the area, a larger needle than that used with FNA is used to get a larger sample of the lump. Ultrasound may be used to help guide the needle.*
 - ***Excisional Biopsy:*** *This is performed in the operating room where the breast will either be numbed or you will be put to sleep. Because the goal is to remove the entire lump, this procedure may not only give a diagnosis, it may also be a cure if an early cancer is present.*

Remember, it is recommended that all women be screened every 1-2 years beginning at age 40 with mammography.

Please never hesitate to ask your doctor about changes in your breasts and what you should be doing to screen for breast cancer.

Source: Klien, Susan. Evaluation of Palpable Breast Masses. American Family Physician. 2005 71:1731-8.