Fibrocystic Breast Disease

WHAT IS FIBROCYSTIC BREAST DISEASE?

Fibrocystic breast is not cancer, but there is a change in the tissue and therefore there is some concern about them being a pre-malignant condition. Fibrocystic breast disease is a condition where your breasts develop numerous (oftentimes painful) cysts within the breasts. It usually feels like little bits of sand or peas when you feel the breast and it can be tender especially prior to menstrual period. Both breasts usually feel the same and lesions are found in similarly in both breasts. If you see just a single mass in only one breast, you would proceed to rule out cancer as the cause.

Nearly two-thirds of women develop suffer from fibrocystic breast disease. Breasts with extensive fibrocystic breast disease make it very difficult for radiologists to interpret mammograms to screen for breast cancer. Their presence can hide suspicious pre-malignant lesions from being discovered until a much later date

The cysts within fibrocystic breast disease are hormonally influenced and change size and shape according to your menstrual cycle. They literally enlarge and swell up and become most painful just prior to menses and are part of the PMS paradigm of symptoms.

Estrogens are known to increase the size and proliferation of fibrocystic breast disease. Although controversial, birth control pills have been given in the hopes of shrinking the cysts. In my experience, birth control pills make fibrocystic breast disease much worse.

IODINE DEFICIENCY

What is not known – in fact, virtually unknown in mainstream medicine – is that fibrocystic breast disease is almost always associated with significant iodine insufficiency. One of the little known benefits of iodine supplementation is that it is extremely effective in treating and eliminating fibrocystic breast disease.

What is also unknown is that the female breast requirement for iodine is actually as much or higher than your thyroid's requirement. It is not a coincidence that women who are hypothyroid usually have fibrocystic breasts. Iodine deficiency is a body-wide condition. If your thyroid is lacking in iodine, so are your breasts.

This also explains why women seem to be affected more often than men by hypothyroid symptoms. The physiologic fact is that a woman's breasts require nearly twice the amount of iodine supplementation on a daily basis more than the average man.

Another organ that requires a lot of iodine is the ovary. I observation I have made over the years is why do women seem to develop a rapid presentation of hypothyroid symptoms just after childbirth?

I think the reason is that the ovarian consumption of iodine goes way up during pregnancy. Because Nature is intent on preserving the fetus at all costs, iodine gets drained from other sources during pregnancy. Once you give birth, then the body is totally depleted of its iodine stores. Add on a nursing mother's breast (which have greatly expanded during pregnancy) demand for iodine and bingo – overt hypothyroid symptoms develop.

You can now see the complex interaction of female physiology on something as simple as iodine. If you start out with minimal stores of iodine to begin with, fail to add sufficient iodine over the years and then navigate the female requirements for iodine to thyroid, breast and ovarian tissues, then it should not come as a surprise that most women are moderately to severely deficient in iodine.

Keep in mind that most men are deficient in iodine, just not as markedly as women.

The good news is that these conditions are rather easily treated with iodine. Iodine is just one of many deficiencies that the modern woman is experiencing. .

EXCESS ESTROGEN

Using hormonal medications, they can actually be the cause of the lesions. Fibrocystic breasts may be the result of too much estrogen in the body. This may be a metabolic problem, in that the body can't metabolize normally the estrogen that is normally there, certainly adding more would make the situation even worse.
The liver has the important job of metabolizing estrogens, progesterones and other body hormones, it produces bile which emulsifies fat and cholesterol, it processes blood sugar and converts glycogen and stored starches into sugar when we need them and sugar back into starch. It removes herbicides or pesticides, drugs, alcohol, car exhaust fumes etc. to remove these impurities from this system. It can be so overwhelmed with work to do that it cannot keep up with its normal functions of metabolizing estrogen and progesterone. When this happens we can see signs of excessive estrogen's affect in the tissues: PMS, headaches, breast tenderness, menstrual cycle irregularities are all very common.

Another way of getting too much estrogen in the tissues is by eating too much estrogen in the form in the diet (called exogenous estrogen). This might occur from eating animal products. Many farm animals (chickens, cattle etc) can be given hormones to produce more eggs, or more milk, or bring them up to market weight faster. Estrogen does have the effect of 'beefing' up the tissues, causing weight retention, fluid retention, a building effect. This is capitalized on by the commercial food industry. So if you eat a lot of eggs, drink a lot of milk, eat a lot of meat, this may contribute to excessive estrogen.

CONSTIPATION

When things move very slowly through the intestines, hormones are reabsorbed out of the bowels and sent back into circulation.

When the liver receives hormones from circulation or portal blood supply from the digestive organs, it is it's job to try and make it safer. Estrogen is very strong in circulation. All of our hormones circulate in tiny amounts and it only takes a smidgen of estrogen or any other hormone to get a strong effect in the body tissues. The body has a complicated system of checks and balances where it raises estrogen when it needs it, and lowers it when it needs it and all of our hormonal organs are complexly connected by a communicating network, each sensing what the other is doing and responding to one another. When the brain says "more estrogen", the ovaries can produce it; when the brain senses the estrogen is high, it sends a signal to the ovaries to stop producing it and the levels fall. The liver, adrenals, thyroid, pituitary, ovaries, are all involved with this.

The liver's job is to make the amount of estrogen in the body safer and it does this by conjugating - it hooks a molecule up with the estrogen molecule to make it less active and excretes it for elimination.

In cases of constipation, intestinal bacteria can unconjugate what the liver has conjugated with estrogen which then can be reabsorbed and sent back to the liver. This also happens with hormones like progesterone, testosterone and other hormones we eat in our diet.

Giving hormonal therapy will only put more work on the liver. Clearing the liver and bowel will have a beneficial effect on allowing the body to do the job it was designed to do. This will also have a beneficial effect on fibrocystic disease.

PROGRESSION OF DISEASE

If the body tries over and over again to cleanse and balance itself and is stopped by the intervention of medications, it will eventually accept a lower state of vitality and if the liver can't keep up with its workload, the body will 'wall off" the problem by creating cysts (or even tumors).

Cysts are like a secondary liver in that they assist the liver in doing its function by removing other hormones from circulation by encapsulating the estrogen. So ovarian and breast cysts, uterine fibroids may be the body's intelligence at avoiding perhaps a more serious disease.

Organs that have all the estrogen receptors in them will be the main target organs for excess estrogen: the uterus, the ovaries, the breast - all tissue has estrogen receptors but these have the greatest quantity.

LYMPHATICS

Lymphatics stimulate fluids in the tissue. The main way fluids circulate throughout the body is by our circulation system including our heart, arteries, veins, microcirculatory vessels and capillaries. At the very end of all of the blood vessels are fine capillaries interacting with one another. The fluids that leak out of the capillaries that forms our tissue fluids existing intracellularly and in the spaces between cells. The lymph system exists in the spaces between cells. Lymph nodes are located in the neck, under the arm, breast, groin - all over the body; these are little collective units of lymphatic flow. Then there are little fine feathery channels that don't have any concrete tube like our arteries but they are fine, delicate connective tissue channels that interstitial and lymphatic fluids circulate around with. Any time we have congestion in the tissues, the lymph system also helps do a cleansing role by filtering tissue fluids with those lymph nodes.
When the liver can't remove all the impurities and extra estrogen from circulation, it will end up in tissue fluids causing edema or puffiness or for some people, cysts in the skin, acne, bloating and fullness of the tissue.
Lymphatic herbs stimulate the lymphatic flow helping to filter impurities from the system. When some impurity escapes the liver or blood vessels or various immune cells, it ends up in the body tissue for the lymph nodes to filter out as much as it can from the system.
The breast has many lymph nodes, especially in the armpits that serve to filter the breast and lymphatic flow is quite pronounced through the breast tissue. So anything that enhances lymphatic flow can have a positive effect on cyst formation or congested hard tissues.

Important lymph herbs:

*** Poke Root (phytolacca) - be cautious using this as it has potential toxicity. Dosage needs to be right and then it is safe. Use tincture medicinally for treating lymph stagnation.**
*** Iris Versicolor/Blue flag - use medicinally for lymph stagnation, esp. good for clearing skin disorders. Tincture is available.**
*** Echinacea is for stagnation or infection. Use when infection such as lymph node enlargement, boils, or tonsilitis is present. Perhaps use for 2-3 months, then stop and use kidney or circulatory herbs.**
*** Red Root/bloodroot (use cautiously) - use medicinally only. Usually only available as tincture.**
*** Cleavers (Galium/bedstraw) - can be taken daily as a tea and nourishment. Tincture also works.**
*** Yarrow**
*** Calendula**

Circulatory Tonics will help lymphatics:

*** Cayenne as capsules, in a tincture formula to help it circulate better.**
*** Gingko**
*** Bilberry for micro circulation**
*** Hawthorne berry**
*** Ginger**
Here's an example of a Lymphatic Tincture you can use: 1 part each of Cleavers, Echinacea, Yarrow, Calendula and 1/4 part of Cayenne. Take 1 tsp twice daily in water before meals.

THERAPIES

- **Limit the amount of estrogenic type foods such as milk, cheese, meat, eggs (a good time to be a vegetarian). Avoid commercial eggs, get from a farm that doesn't medicate the chickens. Eat range free, unmedicated meats.**
- **Improve Liver function with herbs**
- **Help the bowel to eliminate waste more efficiently**
- **Take an iodine supplement daily (or eat seaweeds daily)**
- **B Vitamins: choline, inositol. 300 mg B6 a day**
- **Methionine is not easily obtained in vegetarian diet because it is in meats, but wheat, corn and rice has a bit of methionine. Eat the grain itself, not the flour that has been processed. Choline and Methionine are transformed into Glutathione within the liver. Glutathione is an essential nutrient to the liver, needed by the liver to metabolize, detoxify alcohol. toxins, airborne toxins.**
- **Good foods: beets, milk thistle, carrots, bitter greens such as dandelion, bok choy, chard. Wheat germ.**
- **Foods high in sulfur which also detoxes: garlic, onions.**
- **Lipotrophic supplement may be an easy way to stimulate liver and digestion.**
- **Avoid cooking with oils.**

Realistically this can take 6 months or longer to correct.

Liver herbs (do minimum 3 months):

- **Milk thistle is probably the best one we have to help the liver. Within only a couple of months there can be a noticeable change in PMS, and body tissues. It can be taken as pills, tinctures. You can also get milk thistle seeds which you can grind and sprinkle on casseroles or salad. Roast milk thistle seeds lightly with sesame seeds and put in coffee grinder with a little salt or seaweed and this can be a good salt substitute. Milk thistle is well tolerated for long term use. Milk thistle contains choline and is also known to elevate glutathione levels in the liver which is exactly what you want for detoxification and metabolism of estrogen etc.**
- **Curcumin longa (Turmeric) is anti-inflammatory but it is also a good liver herb to help it metabolize fat and hormones.**
- **Red Root/bloodroot is used as a liver stimulant and helps bile flow. Most cholagogues balance hormones by helping the liver do its job. This needs to be used cautiously.**
- **Dandelion root tea, tincture. This has a beneficial effect on the liver and is often coupled with milk thistle in formulas for the liver.**
- **Burdock root is a liver enhancing herb can be taken daily for many months. It is sold in oriental stores as "Gobo root" and can be chopped into soups, salads etc as a food. In the health food store you will see it used in liver formulas and formulas that help the skin because it is a blood cleanser.**

Bowel Cleansers and Helpers

- **Psylium husks with their high fiber, increases the speed at which the stool is processed out of the bowel.**
- **Adding healthy oils such as 1-2 Tbsp Flaxseed oil to foods in the way of including it in smoothies, drizzling it on vegetables, using in salad dressings.**
- **Include 1,000 mg daily of either evening primrose oil, or borage oil or black currant seed**
- **Drink 5 or more glasses of water, but do it in small amounts, sipping throughout the day so it doesn't just get processed through the kidneys.**
- **Taking trace minerals helps the moisture in the body.**
- **Take 400-600 mg Magnesium citrate daily**
- **Take in 500 mg or more each meal of Vitamin C**
- **10 tablets or caps of Spirulina daily will provide high natural mineral supplement**
- **Introduce bitter herbs into the diet such as mentioned under Liver herbs.**
- **Take healthy bacteria such as probiotics for several months after taking antibiotics.**