

Inflammatory Carcinoma

Female Patient

Definition of Terms:

- **Biopsy** — Procedure to remove cells or tissues for study by a pathologist
- **Carcinoma** — Cancer cells that start in surface layers or lining of ducts
- **Chemotherapy** — Treatment with medications to kill cancer cells
- **Lymph Nodes** — Pea-like areas in the lymphatic system that act as filters for the body's cellular waste; lymph nodes under the arms filter waste from breast tissues
- **Lymphatic System** — Body system that filters the body's cellular waste; located near the vessels and veins in the body
- **Malignant** — Cancerous; a threat to the body
- **Metastasis** — Spread of cancer to other parts of the body
- **Radiation Therapy** — Treatment with X-rays to kill cancer cells

Inflammatory carcinoma is a cancerous condition that has spread to the lymphatic system of the breast. It accounts for approximately 1 percent of all breast cancers. The cancerous cells plug the lymphatics and block the drainage of fluid. Onset and progression of the disease may be rapid.

Possible Signs and Symptoms:

- Breast size may increase rapidly; sometimes a cup size in a few days
- Itching may be unrelenting and unaffected by medicated creams or oral medications
- Discoloration appears to be a bruise that does not go away
- Discoloration ranging from a reddish-pink or reddish-purple, to reddish-brown
- Orange-peel skin, a pin-point dimpling (called peau d'orange)
- Breast may feel warm to the touch
- Color and texture changes of areola
- Ridges and thickened areas of the breast skin
- Swollen axillary lymph nodes or supraclavicular (above collarbone) nodes
- Rarely, a lump that can grow very rapidly (normally, there is no evidence of a lump with inflammatory breast carcinoma)
- Nipple flattening or retraction
- Nipple discharge
- Breast pain (may be constant or stabbing) that does not change during the menstrual cycle; discomfort ranges from tender to very painful



Skin biopsy will confirm a malignancy. Because this disease is systemic (spreads through the body by the lymphatic system), therapy usually starts with chemotherapy immediately. Radiation therapy to the breast may also be used. Surgery may then be performed after the acute (inflammatory) stage of the disease is under control.

Additional Information:
