

Galactoceles

A **galactocele** is a non-cancerous (benign) cyst of milk-like fluid that may occur while a woman is pregnant as well as during or after breastfeeding. Galactoceles are often found by a woman who touches her breast and discovers a lump by accident or during a breast exam. The lump is most often painless and its texture may range from spongy to very firm. Galactoceles range from 20 – 50 mm in size. There may be one or multiple galactoceles in the breast. Women who have a chronic condition of excessive milk production when not pregnant caused by high levels of the hormone prolactin are also at risk for galactocele formation.

A galactocele is diagnosed by identifying its characteristics by mammography or ultrasound. Mammography shows a round lump containing a high fat-fluid level. Ultrasound shows a round, fluid-filled lump. Galactoceles are often hard to distinguish from other benign breast cysts. Recent pregnancy and breastfeeding are the most common factors that distinguish a galactocele from a breast cyst.

Treatment may consist of aspiration by a fine needle for fluid analysis. If the fluid aspirated appears normal to the healthcare provider, no other treatment is required. If the galactocele has been in the breast for a long period of time, the fluid may be thicker and darker. Galactoceles may require repeated needle aspirations, but surgery is rarely needed. Like other breast cysts, galactoceles are harmless.

Additional Information:

