



# Inflammatory Breast Cancer



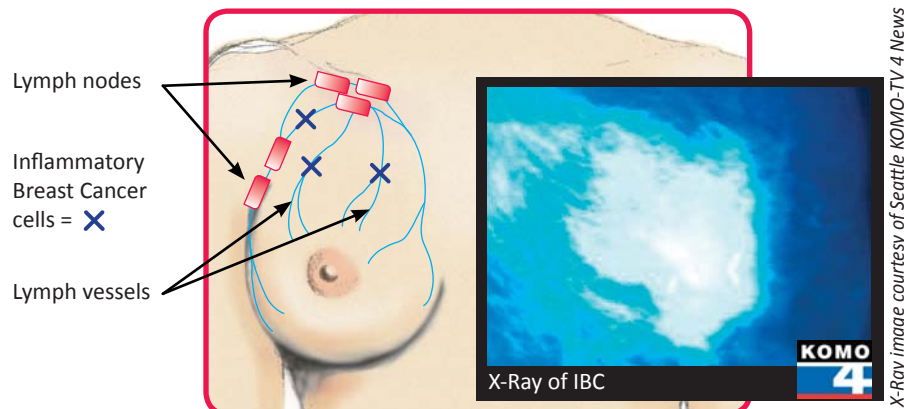
Inflammatory Breast Cancer  
**FOUNDATION**

## What is Inflammatory Breast Cancer?

Inflammatory Breast Cancer (IBC) is the most aggressive (fast-growing) and deadly form of breast cancer. Because of its aggressive nature and the difficulty in diagnoses, it can be easily misdiagnosed or treated incorrectly, compared to more common breast cancers. The disease is typically treated using a combination of therapies which include chemotherapy, surgery and radiation treatment.

## Why is IBC so different?

With Inflammatory Breast Cancer, cancer cells block the lymph cells in the skin of the breast, and as a result, the breast looks inflamed (hence the disease's name). It grows in nests or sheets, rather than as a confined solid tumor, which is why mammograms solely are not normally reliable for finding this type of breast cancer. Diagnosis of IBC is based primarily on the results of a doctor's clinical examination. Biopsy, mammogram, and breast ultrasound are used to confirm the diagnosis.



IBC Symptom illustrations © 2011 Andrew Groen

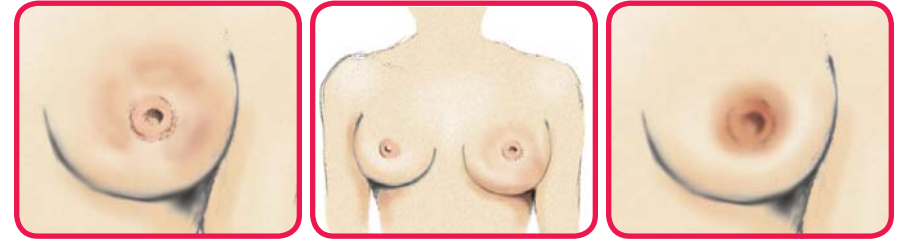
X-Ray image courtesy of Seattle KOMO-TV 4 News

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## Symptoms of IBC



*Inflammatory breast cancer is often misdiagnosed. The best known symptoms of IBC include the following:*



- A breast that appears discolored; (red, purple, pink or bruised)
- Redness, rash or blotchiness on the breast
- A warm feeling in the breast (or may feel hot/warm to the touch)
- A tender, firm and/or enlarged breast (sometimes overnight)
- Persistent itching of the breast (not relieved with cream or salve)
- Flattening or retraction of the nipple
- Consistent pain and/or soreness of the breast (shooting or stabbing pain)
- A hardened area in the breast similar to a pencil lead (not a lump)
- Thickened areas of breast tissue
- Lymph node swelling under the arm or above the collarbone
- Swollen or crusted skin on the nipple
- Change in color of the skin around the nipple (areola)
- Discharge from the nipple
- Ridged or dimpled skin texture - similar to an orange peel

## YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE A LUMP TO HAVE BREAST CANCER

Symptoms develop suddenly, sometimes overnight. Many women have reported waking up in the morning with one breast swollen, with no memory of injury or stress which could have caused the swelling. The breast may itch and be painful (it is an old wives tale that breast cancer does not hurt, IBC can and does cause pain in most instances).

The skin may be ridged or pitted, described as 'peau d'orange' (resembling the skin of an orange). There may be some thickening of the breast tissue, but a lump is not the most common symptom. These symptoms can also occur with benign breast disorders. For example, IBC is often misdiagnosed as mastitis, which is normally treated with a course of antibiotics. **If there is no response to the antibiotics within 5 days, you should immediately demand that IBC be ruled out.**

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