

## **BREAST DISORDERS / MAMMOGRAPHY**

The human breast is a dynamic organ, which responds to changes in levels of female hormones which change during a monthly menstrual cycle. The use of hormones such as those in birth control pills, injections, or in post menopausal hormone replacement, may cause a change in the amount of fluid in the breast which can cause tenderness.

***Fibrocystic Breast changes*** are benign lumps or thickening in the breast tissue which are very common in younger women of childbearing age. These changes lead to breast tenderness, especially associated with nearness to the menstrual period. All women should do monthly breast self exam, and have an annual breast exam by a healthcare provider. Doing regular exams will help you to know your own breast tissue, and make you aware of any new lumps or changes. Any of the following should prompt an immediate evaluation by your doctor:

- New lump
- A lump that grows in size
- A distinct lump, rather than a lumpy area
- A change in breast size
- Nipple discharge, especially if it is bloody
- Redness, itching, or dimpling of the skin over the breast

Mammography, or the X-ray evaluation of the breast, should begin with an initial exam at age 35 years, and be followed by regular annual exams yearly at age 40.

An excellent resource for further information can be found at [http://www.komen.org/intradoc-cgi/idc\\_cgi\\_isapi.dll?IdcService=SS\\_GET\\_PAGE&nodeId=443](http://www.komen.org/intradoc-cgi/idc_cgi_isapi.dll?IdcService=SS_GET_PAGE&nodeId=443)