Mastitis
Inflammation or infection of the breast

Another cause of mastitis is a wound infection following surgery or trauma. Breast surgery often results in the formation of cavities within the breast where tissue has been removed. As part of the normal healing process, these cavities fill up with fluid and blood. Normally this would resorb with time, but if infection sets in, an abscess and wound infection can occur.

Sign of mastitis include: redness, warmth, pain, swelling, breast hardness, nipple discharge and swollen lymph nodes in the armpit on the affected side. Sometimes flu-like symptoms such as headache, nausea, high temperature or chills can occur. Mastitis is diagnosed by a physician based on these symptoms. If a physician is unsure whether a patient has mastitis, he or she may order blood test or a culture of the breast milk. Mastitis is usually treated with antibiotics and warm compresses, and acetaminophen to ease discomfort.

If treatment is delayed or avoided, an abscess may develop in the infected breast area. An abscess is a non-cancerous closed pocket containing pus. They are usually drained using a needle; however sometimes require surgical incision and drainage.

It is important to be aware of any breast changes and report those to your primary care physician. Remember, monthly breast self-examination and yearly mammograms are our best defense against breast cancer.