BREAST ATROPHY

Loss Of Breast Tissue, Shrinkage Of The Breasts

Normal or spontaneous atrophy or shrinkage of the breasts.

♀ Symptom  ♂ Female

About Breast atrophy

Breast atrophy is the normal (menopausal) or spontaneous (as a sign of a disorder) atrophy of the breasts (Pic. 1). It can be caused by low levels of estrogen (hypoestrogenism) and/or elevated male sex hormones (hyperandrogenism) in women in general, such as in antiestrogen treatment for breast cancer.

Hyperandrogenism in women can be associated with set of symptoms called polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) where breast atrophy is a sign of the condition. PCOS is characterized by ovulatory dysfunction and polycystic ovarian morphology (lots of tiny cysts at ovary).

In post-menopausal women, breast atrophy is aggravated by the inelasticity of over-stretched, aged skin. This is due in part to the reduction in estrogen, which affects all body tissues, including breast tissue. The loss of estrogen reduces breast size and fullness (Pic. 2). Estrogen is also essential to maintaining a fibrous protein called collagen, which makes up much of the breast's connective tissue.

Other conditions resulting in breast atrophy include malnutrition such as that associated with eating disorders like anorexia nervosa or with chronic disease. It can also be an effect of weight loss.

In the treatment of enlargement of the breast in men (gynecomastia) or in women (macromastia), and in hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for trans men, breast atrophy may be a desired effect.

Examples of treatment options for breast atrophy, depending on the situation/when appropriate, can include estrogens, antiandrogens, and proper nutrition or weight gain.

Find more about related issues

Diagnoses

Polycystic ovary syndrome
A condition in which a woman has an imbalance of female sex hormones. This may lead to changes in the menstrual cycle, cysts in the ovaries, trouble getting pregnant.
Learn more at: www.fertilitypedia.org/therapy/diag/polycystic-ovary-syndrome

Gallery
Pic. 1: Retracted left breast with skin changes represented by atrophy, pigmentation and sclerosis

Pic. 2: Allegory of Transience, so-called "Vanitas Group", showing old woman with atrophied breasts next to woman in reproductive years

Sources

“Polycystic Ovary Syndrome” —by Ramezani Tehrani and Behboudi-Gandevani licensed under CC BY 3.0

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