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8 Reasons Your Boobs Are So Damn Itchy

This is so, so common.



Itchy boobs can be such a predicament. Of course, one of the universal truths of having skin is that it's going to get itchy at some point. And that's usually no big deal—if you have an itch on your arm, you scratch it. Ditto for

your leg. But when it comes to itchy boobs? Sure, you could scratch them, but you might get a side eye or two in the process depending on your surroundings.

Boob itchiness is normal, and being itchy to the point where you'd see a doctor about it also isn't unheard of. "I see a few patients every month with this complaint," **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, tells SELF. Women will usually mention itching around their nipples or under their breasts, he says, and they often have skin irritation and a burning sensation along with it.

While regularly scratching your breasts (or, well, itching to) is probably nothing to worry about, it could be a sign that something is up. These are the top eight reasons why your boobs might be itchy, plus when you need to discuss the issue with your doctor.

1. You last washed your bra...uh...you actually can't quite remember.

You probably have a go-to bra or two that you wear more often than you'd care to admit, and you probably wash them close to never. Unfortunately, this can cause issues with your boobs. "Dirty clothes, including underclothes, often have bacteria that can infect and irritate the skin," Dr. Goldenberg says. Your chest in general tends to be a place where bacteria may grow thanks to the sweatiness that can happen in the area, so you really should wash your bra at least once a week, Dr. Goldenberg says. (That number goes up if you sweat a lot or if it's a sports bra—you should wash those after every wear.) If you think your itchy boobs are due to a dirty bra, using a topical antibiotic like Neosporin can help with the irritation, but you should really just do a load of laundry.

2. You got a sunburn.

Topless sunbathing on your weekend trip to Miami may have sounded like a good idea at the time, and you hopefully slathered on sunscreen with an SPF of 50 or higher before you whipped off your swimsuit top. Still, your breast skin is sensitive and can easily get burned, especially since it's not typically exposed to sunlight. Along with delightful side effects like peeling, sunburns can cause intense itching thanks to skin irritation. You can help soothe your itching with a moisturizer like Aquaphor, Dr. Goldenberg says. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends cool baths or showers and aloe vera-based moisturizers, too.

3. Your soap, laundry detergent, or dryer sheets aren't agreeing with you.

Contact dermatitis is an allergic reaction that can happen when your skin is exposed to something it doesn't like, and itchiness is one of its major giveaways. If you wash your bras with regular detergent or dry them with dryer sheets, it's possible your boobs will riot and become itchy. (Same goes for towels, sheets if you sleep in the nude, and basically anything else that can come into contact with your chest, including your body wash.) Fragrances in particular are suspect, which is why Dr. Goldenberg recommends switching to fragrance-free products if you notice any reactions.

4. You have eczema.

Eczema is a chronic skin condition that causes dry, itchy inflammation that can show up as a red rash. If you've had breast itchiness for a while and you can't pinpoint why, eczema could be the cause, Jack Jacoub, M.D., a medical oncologist and medical director of MemorialCare Cancer Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, Calif., tells SELF. An over-the-counter topical steroid cream should help, Dr. Goldenberg says (as should avoiding potentially irritating fragrances in your products). If not, call your doctor to ask about something stronger.

5. You have psoriasis.

Psoriasis is a condition that causes skin cells to build up and form scales as well as dry, itchy patches. Unfortunately, much like eczema, it can show up on or under your boobs. You can also treat this itchiness with a topical steroid, Dr. Goldenberg says, as well as avoiding fragrances, which can exacerbate psoriasis flare-ups.

6. Your boobs hate your bra.

Bras are made with all different types of fabric, and some cheaper versions can be seriously irritating to your breasts. "Synthetic fabrics are the biggest problem," Dr. Goldenberg says, calling out polyester and latex as some of the top potential irritants. If you recently tried out a new bra and developed itching, Dr. Goldenberg recommends switching to something that uses a natural fabric like cotton.

7. You have a yeast infection under your boobs.

You probably associate yeast infections with your vagina, but they're actually pretty common under the breasts, too, Dr. Goldenberg says. Moisture can get trapped under there, creating an environment that's perfect for yeast to grow, which can make your skin all itchy. To treat it, you'll need to keep the area dry and use a topical anti-yeast medication.

8. And, in extremely rare cases, itchy boobs can be a symptom of cancer.

If you have breast itchiness, it's much more likely that it's due to one of the above reasons and not breast cancer. With that said, there's a small chance it could be inflammatory breast cancer, a rare but aggressive form of the disease that invades your skin's dermis (the layer of skin that lies beneath your epidermis, the outer layer of skin), creating an inflammatory response, Dr. Jacoub explains. Inflammatory breast cancer also usually has other symptoms like a rash, orange-peel skin, and red, inflamed skin that's hot to the touch, Dennis Holmes, M.D., a breast cancer surgeon and researcher and interim director of the Margie Petersen Breast Center at John Wayne Cancer Institute at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, Calif., tells SELF.

It could also be Paget disease of the breast, another rare form of breast cancer where cancer cells go through the milk ducts and collect in or around the nipple, Dr. Holmes says. With Paget's disease, you may also have flaky or scaly skin around your nipple, bloody nipple discharge, or a newly inverted nipple, per the Mayo Clinic.)

Again, if you have itchiness and it's new, it's probably due to something pretty harmless like a bad detergent. But if it persists, comes with other symptoms, or you can't think of a reason why you're so itchy, call your doctor just in case.