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## **Breast Cellulitis**

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin or connective tissues of the breast. It can occur when lymphatic drainage has been reduced by lymph node removal from surgery or radiation therapy. The most common site is the surgical arm. Women who have had lumpectomies have a potential to have cellulitis in the surgical breast any time after surgery. The same is true for women who have had a mastectomy; the chest wall is subject to cellulitis.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

Infection starts in one area of the breast or chest wall, causing it to become tender, swollen, red, painful and warm to the touch. If left untreated, the infection can spread quickly. Fever and flu-like symptoms may occur.

### **Treatment**

Cellulitis needs immediate treatment with an antibiotic. If you experience sudden onset of swelling, pain or redness of the breast, report the symptoms to your healthcare provider immediately. After medication is started, symptoms usually improve in two to three days; however, all medication should be taken as prescribed. A well-fitted bra will help stabilize the breast and prevent pain caused by movement.

Cellulitis can be recurrent and require treatment multiple times. Some physicians give women with a previous history of infection a standing prescription to carry with them so an antibiotic can be started at the first sign of recurrence. Some infections require intravenous (I.V.) antibiotics because of their severity.