



## Gynecomastia: A Neglected Men's Health Issue in Pakistan

Muhammad Faizan<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Burhan Khan<sup>1</sup>



The enlargement of breast in males is commonly referred to as Gynecomastia. Hormonal imbalance is often the root cause of gynecomastia. Hormones such as growth hormone and prolactin can contribute to this condition. Other potential contributors include the puberty, weight gain, reduced testosterone levels(1). A 20-year study has shown that gynecomastia is a common health issue affecting a significant number of men worldwide, with prevalence ranging from 32% to 65%. The study also reported an annual incidence rate of 3.4 cases per 10,000 men, primarily affecting younger adult(2). A significant knowledge gap exists regarding the prevalence of gynecomastia in Pakistan due to insufficient statistical data which highlight's a crucial gap in our understanding of men's health in this country. As per Koch et al, the dramatic increase in incidence over the past two decades in post-pubertal males suggests hormonal changes especially sex hormones, which might be associated with other adverse health consequences in men.

These studies have suggested that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages harms the male reproductive system by reducing sperm motility and concentration, thus lowering the count of sperm and having an overall inhibitory effect on testicular function.(3). Additionally, another study revealed that SSBs consumption resulted in an elevated estrogen level in males, contributing to hypogonadism, the primary cause of gynecomastia(4).

In adolescents males, the development of breast tissue have significant negative effects on the mental health, resulting in depression, anxiety, body dissatisfaction, and reduced self-esteem(5). This situation is further complicated by the fact that this can lead to a lack of success in various fields and could drag individuals behind as their friend's transition into adulthood. Moreover, it could increase their depression and trigger them into self-harming behaviors or even suicide.

Extensive research is required to estimate the prevalence and specific causes of gynecomastia in Pakistan, emphasizing environmental factors. There is a need for public awareness campaigns raising awareness regarding the health risks associated with sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) and their link to gynecomastia, among parents, schools, and teenagers. Relevant medical associations must develop standardized guidelines for clinicians to diagnose and treat gynecomastia, addressing it as a public health concern in Pakistan.

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<sup>1</sup> COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus

**Correspondence:**  
Muhammad Burhan Khan  
muhammadburhank96@gmail.com

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