Anatomy of the lactating breast

Glandular and fatty tissue

- **Cooper's ligaments**: Support framework for glandular and fatty tissue.
- **Retromammary fat**: Fatty tissue at the back of the breast, at the chest wall.
- **Intraglandular fat**: Fatty tissue that is intermingled with the glandular tissue.
- **Subcutaneous fat**: Fatty tissue that lies just under the skin.
- **Glandular tissue**: Secretory tissue that makes and stores milk.

Complex ductal network

- **Secondary milk ducts**: The branching ducts throughout the breast that transport milk from the glandular tissue to the main milk ducts.
- **Main milk ducts**: The larger ducts (numbering between 4 – 18) that lead into the nipple – the conventionally described lactiferous sinuses do not exist.

Relevance to practice

1. Less than 4% of milk can be stored in the ducts, making milk ejections essential for removing milk. Since stress can inhibit milk ejection, being comfortable and relaxed helps milk flow.

2. 65% of the glandular tissue lies within a 30 mm radius of the nipple base and the ducts reside close to the skin surface. Pressure on the ducts and tissue in this area can restrict milk flow.

3. The ratio of glandular tissue to intraglandular fat varies greatly between women. It is the amount of glandular tissue, not breast size, that determines the ability to make milk.