

Breast Self Examination

The Key to Breast Health

Breast Self Examination or (BSE) takes just a few minutes, and you only need to do it once a month.

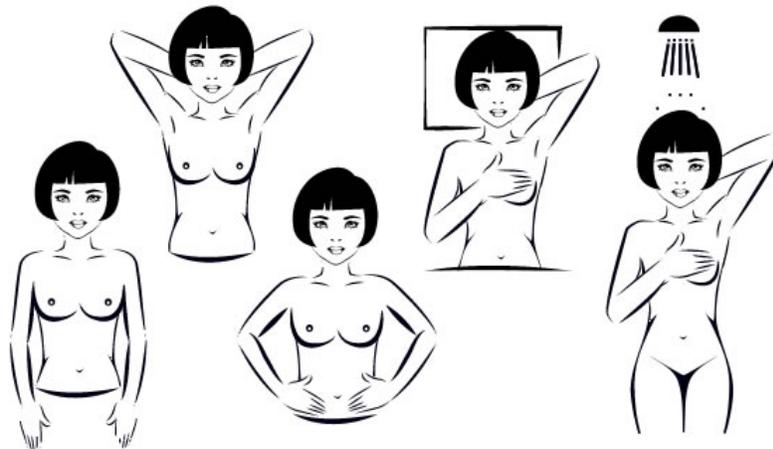
- If you are menstruating, perform BSE 7 to 10 days after the first day of your period, when your breasts are least tender.
- If you no longer menstruate, choose the same day each month-to remind yourself to do BSE.
- As you do your examination, keep in mind that your goal is to become acquainted with how your breasts normally LOOK and FEEL.
- Your knowledge of your breast texture and appearance will increase the more you perform BSE.
- This knowledge will help you identify a change more quickly and report it to your doctor.

Some of the changes you should watch for include:

- A lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm area
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
- A puckering, dimpling, or redness of the breast skin

Remember, a change you see or feel in your breast does not automatically mean you have breast cancer.

But it is best to report any change to your doctor for further evaluation.



LOOKING: Use a mirror.

- Hands on hips.
- Look at the same things with your arms in different positions.

First, stand in front of a mirror, keeping your arms relaxed at your sides.

- Notice the shape and size of your breasts.
- Compare both breasts. It is not unusual for one to be larger than the other.
- Changes in shape and size occur

Next, look at your skin.

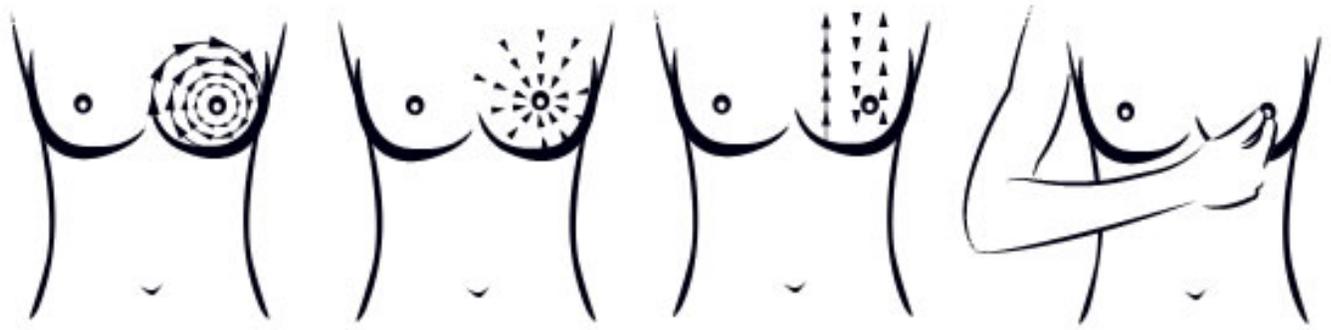
- Take note of the texture and color..

FEELING: As you do this part of the examination remember that some lumpiness is normal for many women.

- Self-examination helps you become familiar with the normal texture of your breast tissue.
- Often you can feel subtle difference in the shower.



- To examine your right breast, lie on your back.
- Place a pillow under your right shoulder.
- Put your right arm out, with your elbow at a 90 degree angle or tuck it upward but keep your elbow flat . This position flattens the breast and makes it easier to examine.
- Use the padded area of your fingers- not the tips.
- Reverse this procedure for your left breast.



A

B

C

D

Some women use lotion to make it easier for their fingers to slide over their skin.

A. Circles (fig A)

- Use the pads of three or four fingers of your left hand to examine your right breast. Move your fingers in very small circles.
- For each small circle, change the amount of pressure so you can feel all levels of your breast tissue.
- Don't lift your fingers from your breast as you move them- you might miss something that way.

B. "Wedge" Pattern. (fig B)

- Move your fingers around the breast in a wedge pattern, covering the entire breast area (

C. Make a pattern of vertical strips. (fig C)

- Cover the self-exam area in vertical strips.
- Start in your armpit and move down to just below your breast.
- Now move your fingers over- just the width of one finger- and move up again.
- Continue this up-and-down pattern until you have covered the entire self-exam area, from your collarbone to just below your breast (see figure C).

Relax your arm and examine your armpit.

- Some parts of your breast go up into your armpit.
- Examine this area again, with your arm relaxed at your side.
- It will feel a little different in this position.

Check for fluid coming from your nipple. (fig D)

- Gently squeeze your nipple.
- Clear or milky fluid coming from the nipple is more common than bloody fluid.
- All nipple discharge should be checked by your doctor.

Repeat using your right hand to examine your left breast.

Some women find it helpful to repeat the above examination steps while in the shower or bath.

What to Do If You Find a Lump:

Do not panic!

Eighty percent of lumps found are not cancerous. See your doctor. Remember, Breast cancer can develop at any age, but your risk increases as you grow older. Your chances of developing breast cancer are twice as great at age 70 as they were at age 50.

- More than 95 percent of all women with breast cancer have no family history of the disease.
- Early diagnosis of breast cancer may save your life.
- Mammography is a safe and effective screening tool, finding most breast cancers before they can be felt.
- But it is important to be examined regularly by your doctor and perform monthly breast self-examination, following-up on any physical symptoms even if a mammogram is negative.