

## Monthly Breast Self-Examination

Beginning at age 20 all women should begin breast self-examination (BSE). Do BSE once a month to become familiar with the usual appearance and feel of your breasts — this makes it easier to notice any changes in the breast from month to month. Early discovery of a change from what is “normal” is the main idea behind BSE.

If you menstruate, the best time to do BSE is 2 or 3 days after your period ends, when your breasts are least tender or swollen. If you no longer menstruate, pick a day, such as the first day of the month, to remind yourself to do BSE.

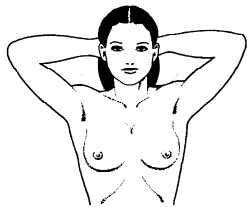
Look for any of the following in the breasts:

- ◆ lumps or thickenings
- ◆ change in skin texture or skin scaling
- ◆ change in breast size or shape
- ◆ puckering or dimpling
- ◆ nipple discharge (fluid coming from a nipple)

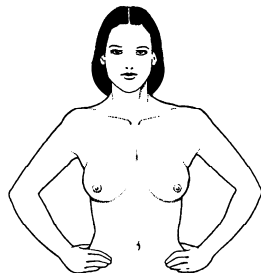
### How to do BSE:

1. Stand in front of a mirror that is large enough for you to see your breasts clearly. Turn slowly from side to side checking both breasts for anything unusual, like the above changes.

Steps 2 and 3 are designed to bring out any change in the shape or contour of your breasts. As you do them, you should feel your chest muscles tighten.



2. Watching closely in the mirror, clasp your hands behind your head and press your hands forward.



3. Next, press your hands firmly on your hips and

push your elbows forward to flex your chest muscles. Now look again for dimpling, puckering, or other changes.

4. Gently squeeze each nipple and look for a discharge.

Some women do the next part in the shower because fingers glide over soapy skin, making it easy to concentrate on the texture underneath. Alternatively, some women use lotion or powder to help their fingers glide easily.

5. Raise one arm. Use the middle 3 fingers of your other hand to check the breast and the surrounding area firmly, carefully and thoroughly. Use the sensitive pads — not the tips — of the fingers, with your fingers held flat against your breast. Concentrate on feeling for any unusual lump or mass under the skin.



Feel the tissue by using small, circular motions (the size of a dime) and varying degrees of pressure in each spot. Examine your whole breast without lifting your hand. To be sure to cover the whole breast take your time and follow a definite pattern like lines, circles or wedges. Choose one of these and use it every time.

**Lines** — Start in the underarm area and move your fingers downward little by little until they are below the breast. Then move your fingers slightly toward the middle and slowly move back up. Go up and down until you cover the whole area.

**Circles** — Beginning at the outer edges of your breast, move your fingers slowly around the whole breast in a circle. Move around the breast in smaller and smaller circles, gradually working

toward the nipple.

**Wedges** — Starting at the outer edge of the breast, move your fingers toward the nipple and back to the edge. Check your whole breast, covering one small wedge-shaped section at a time.

Whichever pattern you choose, be sure to also check the underarm areas and the upper chest every time.

6. The way you position yourself makes a difference in how easily you can feel changes in your breasts. So it is important to repeat step 5 while lying down. Lie flat in your back, with one arm over your head, and a pillow or folded towel under the opposite shoulder. This position flattens the breast and makes it easier to check. If you have large breasts, roll away from the side being examined to help even out your breast tissue. Check each breast and the area around it carefully using one of the patterns described above.



7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 on the opposite breast.
8. Feel along the top of each collar bone and down the middle of the chest for any lumps or other abnormalities.
9. If you find **any** abnormalities call your doctor as soon as possible.

### Remember

Most lumps found in the breast are not cancer. But **any lump** must be checked by a doctor as soon as it is found.

## *Yearly Mammogram*

A mammogram is a special breast X-ray that can detect 90 percent of cancers — even before a lump can be felt. While mammograms are an important tool in the early detection of breast cancer, they are not perfect. Since mammograms can miss 10% of breast cancers, a woman should not ignore something she feels just because her mammogram is normal. Women age 40 and older should have one every 1 to 2 years. Women who are at higher risk should talk with their doctor about whether to have one before age 40 and how often to have them.

If a lump is found in the breast of a younger woman, an ultrasound may be used instead of a mammogram due to the density of the breasts in this age group. Also, ultrasound or special mammogram views may be used to better image a lump found on a mammogram.

## *Yearly Clinical Examination*

Women should have their breasts examined by a qualified health professional once each year (in addition to any exam done at the mammogram).

## *Genetic Testing*

There are genetic tests for hereditary genes (BRCA1 and BRCA2) that may increase a woman's risk of breast and/or ovarian cancer. A blood sample is required and genetic counseling is recommended. Not every person needs genetic tests — talk to your doctor to see if these are appropriate for you.

### **Compliments of**

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### **For additional information**

The Breast Cancer Network of Strength  
[www.networkofstrength.org](http://www.networkofstrength.org)

Breast Cancer.org  
[www.breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org)

The American Cancer Society  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)  
(800) 227-2345

The National Cancer Institute at the  
National Institute of Health  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

# Breast Cancer Screening



Today, one in eight American women will develop breast cancer at some point in life. 95% of all breast cancers are found first by women themselves. It is the second leading cause of death in women. Up to 40% of deaths from breast cancer could be prevented if the following three-step program is followed: yearly mammograms, yearly clinical exams, and monthly breast self exams. The most important thing to remember is that breast cancer is best treated when found early. This brochure will help you understand these ways of screening for breast cancer.