

Why You Should Examine Your Breasts Monthly:

If breast cancer is found early and treated right away, you have a great chance for cure. So, it is very important to do breast self-exam (BSE) every month.

When to Examine Your Breasts:

Examine your breasts the same way once a month, about a week after you get your period, when your breasts are not tender and swollen. After menopause, check your breasts on the first day of every month. If you have had a hysterectomy, check with your doctor first about choosing the right day of the month.

ALL WOMEN ARE AT RISK! Your risk may be higher if you:

- are older than 50.
- have a mother or sister who has had breast cancer.
- have had breast cancer before.

- started menopause when you were older.
- started having your periods when you were younger than 12 years old.
- have had your first baby after 30.
- are overweight.

3 Steps Against Breast cancer:

1. Have a mammogram every year.
2. Have a clinical breast exam by a doctor or health care worker every year.
3. Do a breast self-exam once a month.

What You Should Do If You Find a Lump or Thickening:

If you find a lump or thick spot during your breast self-exam, it is very important to see your doctor. Don't be afraid. Most lumps or changes are not cancer.

Why You Should Have a Mammogram:

A mammogram is a breast x-ray. It can find cancer when it is too small to be felt by your hand. A mammogram is one of the most important ways to find breast cancer early. Have your first mammogram when you are 40 years old. Have a mammogram every year after that.



Vision Loss Resources

You may contact Vision Loss Resources in Minnesota to obtain copies (brail, audio/spoken) of this material by calling 612-871-2222 or by visiting their website at www.visionlossresources.org.

*This booklet was created in partnership with the American Cancer Society.
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org*



Breast Self-Examination
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Breast Self-Examination

How to examine your breasts



3 simple ways you can save your life by finding breast cancer early.



1 In the Shower:

Your hands will be wet and it will be easier to move them over your skin. With the pads of your fingers (not your fingertips), move firmly over every part of each breast.

Use your right hand to examine your left breast. Use your left hand to examine your right breast.

What do I check for?

Check for any hard lump or thickening.

2 If you can see yourself in front of a mirror:

Place your arms down at each side. Look for changes in shape, size and dimpling of the skin. Look for changes in the nipple.

Place your arms up above the head and look for the same things.

Place your hands on your hips and lean your chest forward.

Look at your nipples to check them for discharge or skin changes. If there is discharge, see your doctor right away.

3 Lying Down:

Put a pillow under the shoulder of the breast which you are going to examine. That will help spread out your breast evenly over your chest.

Use your right hand to examine your left breast. Use your left hand to examine your right breast.

Should my breasts look or feel alike?

Your breasts might not look exactly the same. That is okay. You are looking for changes from month to month.

Why should I do a breast exam?

By doing a breast self-exam every month, you will get to know what your breasts feel like and what is normal for you. Your breasts may have some normal lumps which are always there. When you find something different than normal, then you need to talk with your doctor.

What part of my finger should I use?

Use the flat parts of your middle 3 fingers to examine your breasts.

Patterns You Can Use

There are 3 patterns of breast self-exam. Choose the way which is most easy for you. You only need to do one pattern. Use the same pattern each time you examine your breasts.

After you have examined your right breast, examine your left breast in the same way.

Compare what you feel in one breast with what you feel in the other breast.

- 1)The first pattern is circular. Using this pattern, begin with a circular motion at the center of the breast and slowly work in concentric circles, like ripples in a pond, out from the nipple. The circles should gradually cover the entire breast as well as the area by your collarbone and under your arm.
- 2)The second pattern is vertical. Using this pattern work in a top to bottom motion, like rainfall, beginning at the center of the rib-cage and working to the side, including up to the collarbone and to the side under the arm.
- 3)The third pattern radiates from the center of the breast like pieces of a pie or spokes of a wheel. Begin at the nipple and work out in sections, making sure to cover the entire breast, including up to the collarbone, and under your arm.