

A Woman's Guide
to Breast Care



Y-ME National
Breast Cancer
Organization™

Breast Self-Examination

Breast self-examination (BSE) takes just a few minutes, and you only do it once a month. As you do your examination, keep in mind that your goal is to become acquainted with how your breasts normally LOOK and FEEL. You will become more familiar with your breasts if you perform BSE on a regular basis. This knowledge may help you identify a change, which should be reported to your medical professional.

What changes should I look for?

- Lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm area
- Change in the size and/or shape of the breast
- Puckering, dimpling and/or redness of the breast skin
- Scaliness, redness, itching and/or swelling of the nipple or surrounding area

When should I perform BSE?

- If you are menstruating, perform BSE 7 to 10 days after the first day of your period, when your breasts are less tender
- If you are no longer menstruating, choose the same day each month to remind yourself to do BSE

1

Looking

Use a mirror.

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 breast to be larger than the other. Now look at your nipples. Notice their direction and how alike they are. Next, look at your skin. Take note of the texture and color. Changes in shape and size occur with age.

Look at the same things with your arms in different positions.



Hands on hips.

Bending forward.

Arms raised above head.

Looking

2

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.

To examine your right breast, lie on your back.

Place a pillow or a folded towel under your right shoulder. Put your right arm out, with your elbow at a 90° angle. This position flattens the breast and makes it easier to examine.

3

Check the entire self-exam area.
(see dotted line)

The dotted line in this image shows the area you need to examine during BSE. Pay careful attention to the shaded area—most breast tissue is located here.

4

Use the pads of your fingers—not the tips.

Use the pads of the three middle fingers of your left hand to examine your right breast.

Feeling

5

Move the pads of your fingers in very small circles.

As you examine your breasts, move the pads of your fingers in little circles—about the size of a dime. Don't lift your fingers from your breast as you move them—you might miss something that way. If your fingers rub you too much, use some lotion to make it easier.

6

Cover the exam area in up-and-down 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.

7

Examine all levels of breast tissue.

For each small circle, change the amount of pressure so you can feel all levels of your breast tissue. Make each small circle three times—once light, once medium and once deep—before you move on to the next area.

8

Examine your armpit.

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

9

Look for nipple discharge.

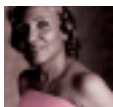
Some women may see a clear or milky fluid discharge from their nipple. This is probably normal. If the nipple discharge happens without squeezing, continues to happen, and is only from one nipple, or is a bloody fluid, you should be checked by your medical professional.

10

Repeat these steps on your left breast, using your right hand.

What If I Find A Lump?

1. **Do not panic!**
About 80% of lumps found are not cancerous.
2. **See your medical professional.**
3. **For information and support, call the 24-hour Y-ME National Breast Cancer Hotline at 1-800-221-2141 or visit www.y-me.org.**



Other things you should know about breast health.

Age

Breast cancer can develop at any age, but your risk increases as you grow older.

Family History

More than 70% of all women with breast cancer have NO family history of the disease.

Hormonal Contraceptives & Hormonal Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Talk to your medical professional carefully about the risk of breast cancer in relationship to hormonal contraceptives and hormonal replacement therapy (HRT), especially if there is a history of breast cancer in your family. The role they may play in breast cancer is still under study.

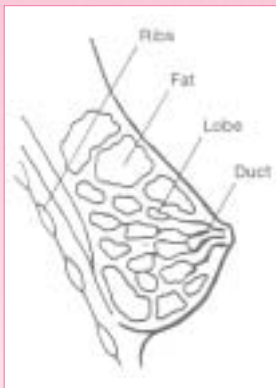
Implants & Breast Reductions

Some women are not satisfied with the size of their breasts and decide to have surgery to make them larger or smaller. Women who choose to make their breasts larger have implants added to their own breast tissue. If this is something that you are thinking about, you should know that implants might make it difficult for mammography to discover an early breast cancer. Other women who want their breasts made smaller choose to have some of their breast tissue surgically removed. One of the complications of this procedure is that it could interfere with the ability to breast feed later on. Both procedures should be carefully discussed with a plastic surgeon before a final decision is made.

Breast Injury

If you receive an injury to your breasts, you can relax! There is no link between breast injury and breast cancer. However, an injury to the breast should not be ignored. It should be treated like any other injury to your body. If it does not heal, see your medical professional.

Mammography



A mammogram can show many cancers before they are felt. A regular mammogram is important even if you or your medical professional do not feel anything abnormal when examining your breasts.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast, performed with a

specially designed x-ray machine. A registered x-ray technologist will position your breast between two plastic plates. It is important to flatten the breast to spread out the tissue to help identify any abnormal areas. Some women may find mammograms uncomfortable due to the firm pressure placed on each breast.

The standard screening examination requires a minimum of two pictures of each breast. More pictures may be needed depending on breast size or body shape. Proper positioning and improving technology allow mammography to be done with the lowest radiation exposure possible.

Are previous mammogram results important for comparison?

Yes! Be sure your previous mammograms are available to the radiologist for comparison with your new mammogram. This comparison makes earlier recognition of minimal changes possible.

What credentials should I look for in a mammography facility?

Make sure your mammogram is done at a facility displaying a FDA certificate of approval. This assures good quality, trained and licensed technologists, and experienced, board certified radiologists.

Sometimes a lump may be felt but not seen on a mammogram. Be sure to perform monthly breast self-examination in addition to an annual clinical breast exam with your medical professional.



Three-Point Early Detection Program

There are three important methods for the early detection of breast cancer. No one method stands alone. While no scientific evidence supports that clinical breast exams and breast self-exams will increase your survival rate should you develop breast cancer, at this time these are the recommended tools, along with mammography, to detect breast cancer.

1

Get a routine mammogram.

Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization recommends that women begin annual mammography screening at age 40. Women under 40 with either a family history of breast cancer or other concerns about their personal risk should consult a medical professional about when to begin mammography.

2

See your medical professional on a regular basis.

A clinical breast examination should be part of your routine checkup. Beginning at age 20 women should have a clinical breast exam every 2 to 3 years. Women age 40 and older should have one every year.

3

Perform breast self-exams once a month.

If you find something you know is unusual for you, schedule a clinical breast examination with a medical professional.

A change you see or feel in your breast(s) does not automatically mean you have breast cancer. But it is best to report any change to your doctor for further evaluation.

**A LUMP YOU FIND SHOULD
NEVER BE IGNORED.**

Mission

The mission of Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization is to ensure, through information, empowerment and peer support, that no one faces breast cancer alone.



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24-hour Y-ME National Breast Cancer Hotline
1-800-221-2141 (English)*
1-800-986-9505 (Spanish)

*Interpreters available in 150 languages.

www.y-me.org

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