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Breast Self- Examination

What you can do



Let's Make Cancer History

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What to Look for When You Do Breast Self-Examination (BSE)

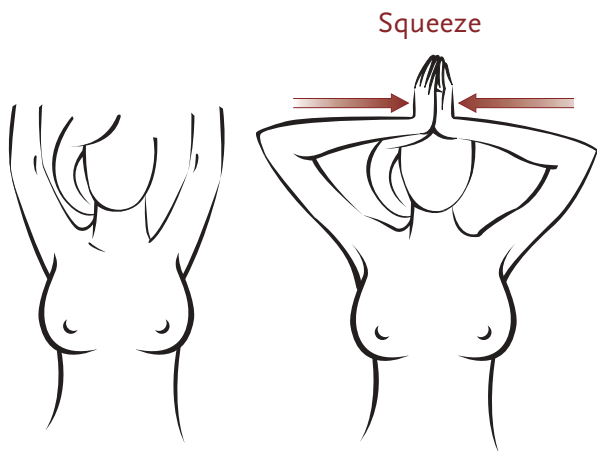
You are looking for changes in your breasts. First, you need to learn what is normal for your breasts. It may be normal for your breasts to feel a bit lumpy. You should check for any new place in your breast that feels thicker or harder than the rest of your breast.

Use a Mirror

Always begin checking your breasts by standing in front of a mirror. Leave your arms by your side. Look at your breasts. Slowly turn from side to side. Are there any changes in size and shape from the last time you looked? Check for rashes or puckery skin. Look for any discharge from your nipples.

Arms Up

Lift your arms above your head while still looking in the mirror. Put your hands behind your ears. Look at your breasts and under your arms. Lower your hands to your nose. Squeeze your palms together. Are there any changes?



Keep Standing

Complete the following steps for both breasts. Use the opposite hand for each breast. Start just below your collarbone. Cover all of your breast, even the nipples.

Hold the fingers of your hand together. Keep your fingers stiff and your hand flat. Use the pads of your fingers, not the tips.

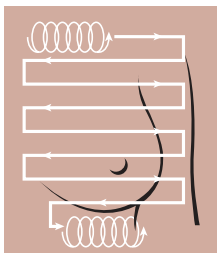


Flat hand

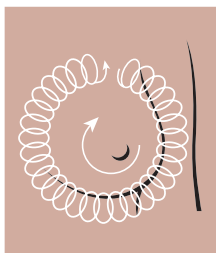


Not correct

Bend your wrist to go over the curves of your breast. Keep constant contact and pressure with your skin. Make small circles covering the entire breast using one of the methods pictured below.



Grid



Circular

Grid Method

Make small circles in straight lines starting just below your collarbone. Cover the area outlined by the box.

Make small circles all the way across your breast. Go slowly. Now move your fingers down. Repeat the small circles back and forth across your breast.

Keep moving down until you are below your breast. You may need to make many circles to check your whole breast. Make sure you check your nipple. Hold fingers stiff. Bend your wrist to go under your arm. Complete these steps for both your breasts.

Circular Method

Make small circles starting at the outside edge of your breast. Cover the area outlined by the circle.

Make the small circles all the way around your breast. Go slowly. Now move your fingers in toward your nipple. Go around the breast again. The circle will be smaller this time.

Keep moving in toward your nipple. You may need to make many circles to check your whole breast. Make sure you check your nipple. Hold fingers stiff. Bend your wrist to go under your arm. Complete these steps for both your breasts.

After you cover the whole area of your breast, check under your arm and up to your collarbone too. Relax your arm by your side. Slide your hand under that arm. Make small circles like you did over your breast.



Lie Down

Lie on your back on a firm surface. Put one hand behind your head. Hold the fingers of your other hand together. Check both breasts again, using the pads of your fingers and bending your wrist to cover the curves of your breasts.

Large Breasts

If your breasts are large they may fold over on your chest. This fold may feel like a firm ridge. Do not panic. This ridge is normal for large breasts. Lift them up to check all parts for changes.

What Should I Do if I Find a Change?

Most of the time the changes women find in their breasts are not cancer. If you do find a change in your breasts, call your doctor or clinic that day. Visit your doctor as soon as you can. Your doctor will be able to do tests to tell you what the change in your breast means. The sooner you have these tests the better.

A visit to your doctor will give you peace of mind if your lump is not cancer. And it may save your life if you need medical treatment.

Want to Learn More?

If you want to learn more about checking your breasts:

- ask your doctor or a trained health professional
- call our **Cancer Information Service** toll-free at **1 888 939-3333**.

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