Breast Self Examination (BSE)
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Do It For Yourself
Breast self examination is an easy way and can be a useful tool in detecting for breast cancer early when it is most treatable (Early detection is the best defense against breast cancer).

• The way breasts look and feel is different for every woman. The goal of BSE is to become familiar with the way your breasts look and feel to you. Then, if there are any changes you are more likely to notice it earlier, so you can see your doctor as soon as possible.
• You can talk to your doctor or nurse about the benefits and limitations of BSE.
• This brochure will help you know how to do BSE properly.
• Some important tips to remember:
  • Examine your breasts once a month when they are least tender (usually 5-10 days from the first day of your period).
  • If you no longer have periods, choose one fixed day each month that will remind you to do BSE.
  • If you are breast feeding, empty your breasts first.
  • Call your doctor or nurse if there are any changes.
  • Remember, most breast changes are NOT cancer, but DO check up to be sure!

The Three Breast Cancer Screening Tests are the following:

Clinical breast examination by a doctor
• Age 20 – 40................................. Every 3 years
• Age 40 and older........................ Yearly

Mammogram
• Age 40 and 69.............................. Every 1 to 2 years

Breast Self Examination
• Age 20 and older.......................... Once a month
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Follow the 7 “P’s” of BSE

1. Positions (Standing & Lying Down)
Stand to look at your breasts:
Standing undressed to the waist in front of a mirror in three positions:
• Arm relaxed at sides.
• Arms raised above head.
• Press your hands firmly on your waist.
Look at your breasts for any changes in size, shape of the breasts, color, texture of the nipples, skin and direction of your nipples point (notice if there is any retraction of the nipple).

Observe any stain on your night clothes or bra from your nipples, especially if only from one side. If there is any change or look unusual, seek medical advice immediately.
Lying down position to feel your breasts:
Lie down on your back, so the breast tissue spreads more evenly over the chest wall, making it easier to feel all of the breast tissue.

Place your right arm behind your head. Placing a pillow or rolled towel under the right shoulder (under the breast from the back) may be helpful.

Use the finger pads of the 3 middle fingers of your left hand to feel for lumps in the right breast. Do the same way for the left breast.
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2. Perimeter (Where to Feel)

The area to be examined should include all the breast tissue and the arm-pit (as shown on the picture). The breast tissue is divided into four quadrants (parts) plus the area around the nipple. Most breast cancers are found in the upper outer part of the breast.
3. Palpation with Pads of Fingers (How to Feel)

Use over tapping dime-sized circular motions of your three middle finger pads to feel the breast tissue. Feel a small portion of the breast at a time until the entire breast has been checked. Do the same with the left breast.

Do not lift your fingers from your breast between palpations. You can use powder or lotion to help your fingers slide from one spot to the next. Some women prefer to do the exam during the shower because fingers move smoothly over soapy skin, making it easy to feel the texture underneath.
4. Pressure (How Deep to Feel)

Use three levels of pressure for each palpation, from light to deep, to examine the full thickness of your breast tissue. Using pressure is important because the breast is not flat. You need to feel all the way through the tissue to your ribs.
5. Pattern of Search

Think of your breast as a face on a clock. Start at 12 o’clock and move toward 1 o’clock in small circular motions. Continue around the entire circle until you reach 12 o’clock again. Keep your fingers flat and in constant contact with your breast. When the circle is complete, move in one inch toward the nipple and complete another circle around the clock. Continue in this pattern until you have felt the entire breast. Make sure to feel the upper outer areas that extend into your armpit.

Women who have had breast surgery should also examine the area and along the scar. Lastly, gently squeeze your nipples. If there is any discharge coming out, inform your physician or nurse.
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6. Practice with Feedback
Have your doctor or nurse show you how to do BSE. Then ask them to watch you do the exam to see that you are doing it right. Ask them to describe and let you feel the different types of tissue in your breast so you know what is normal for you.

If you feel anything new in your breasts, seek medical help right away.

7. Plan of Action
You should have a personal breast health plan:
- Discuss breast cancer early detection guidelines with your doctor or nurse.
- Schedule your clinical breast exam and mammogram as appropriate for your age.
- Perform BSE monthly.
- Report any breast changes to your doctor or nurse.