

Breast Self-Examination

Breast Self-Examination should be practiced once a month. If you menstruate, do it two or three days after the end of your period, when your breasts are least likely to be tender or swollen. If you are not menstruating, due to: location, menopause, surgical menopause, amenorrhea, or other causes, choose a day such as the first of the month, and perform a breast self examination each month on that day.



1. Stand before a mirror. Inspect both breasts for anything unusual, such as discharge from the nipples, rash or puckering, dimpling, or scaling of the skin.

The next two steps are designed to emphasize any changes in the **shape or contour** of your breasts.



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



3. Next, press hands firmly on hips and bow slightly toward the mirror as you pull your shoulders and elbows forward.



4. Raise your left arm. Use three or four fingers of your right hand to explore your left breast firmly, carefully, and thoroughly feeling for any unusual lump or mass under the skin. Beginning at the outer edge, press the flat part of your fingers in small circles, moving the circles slowly around the breast. Pay special attention to the tail of the breast (area between the breast and armpit) and the armpit. Repeat this for the right breast using your left hand. Hint: Some women like to do this part of the exam in the shower. Fingers glide over soapy skin, making it easier to feel textures.



5. Gently squeeze the nipple of your left breast and look for a discharge. Repeat this examination for your right breast. (If you have any discharge during the month, see your health care practitioner).

6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 lying flat on your back with your arm over your head and a pillow or folded towel under the shoulder of the breast you are examining. This position flattens the breast tissue making it easier to examine. Use the same circular motion described above in step 4. Do this for the left and the right breast.



If you find anything unusual or suspicious, or have any questions, report it to your doctor immediately. Remember, over 80% of most breast problems are found through self-examination. You owe it to yourself and to your good health to do regular breast self-examination.