

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 health care provider first about choosing the right day of the month.

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

- are older than 50 years old.
- have mothers or sisters who have 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.
- have never given birth.
- drink a lot of alcohol, smoke or use other substances.
- are overweight.

Even though these are risk factors, some women don't have them. Therefore, screening through regular mammograms and doing breast self-exam is very important.

Are Lesbians at Greater Risk?

There is some evidence to suggest that lesbians may have a higher incidence of breast cancer. Certain risk factors are more common among lesbians. These risk factors include:

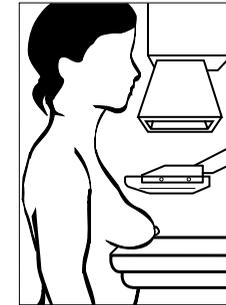
- Lesbians are less likely to visit a health care provider for routine gynecological services such as birth control and pre-natal care. Therefore, they have less cancers detected at earlier, more treatable stages.
- Not receiving routine cancer screening. Lesbians seek less health care because of discomfort of coming out to health care providers.
- While women traditionally provide care to others, they often neglect their own health care needs.
- Overall, women earn less money than men and are less able to afford regular medical care. Lesbians are affected more directly by women's lower earning power and do not have the benefit of a spouse's health insurance coverage.

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

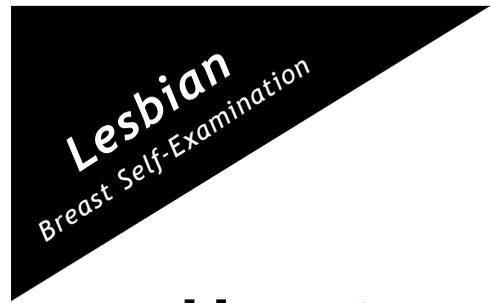
If you find a lump or thick spot during your breast self-exam, it is very important to see your health care provider. Don't be afraid. Most lumps or changes are not cancer.

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.



Getting a Mammogram



How to Examine Your Breasts



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

Breast Self-Examination
B . S . E .
© 2013 C.C.H.
Lesbian_b04-06



1 In the Shower:

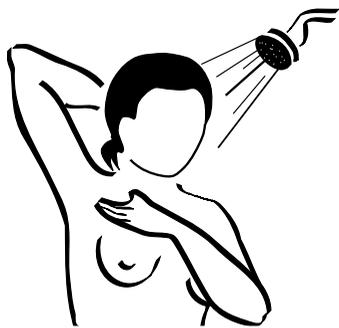
Some women prefer to examine their own breasts; others prefer their partner to do the examination. Breasts are easiest to examine when they are wet with soapy water. Your hands will be wet and it will be easier to move them over your skin. With the pads of your fingers (not your fingertips), move firmly 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 look for?

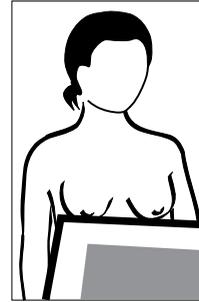
Look for any hard lump or thickening.



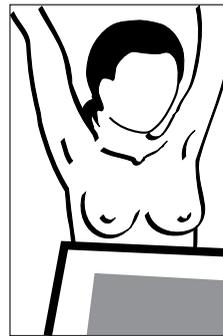
2 In Front of a Mirror:

Your breasts might not look exactly the same. That is normal. You are looking for change in the size, shape, and the way your breasts look from month to month.

Begin by visually inspecting your breasts while you are standing. First, place your arms at your sides.



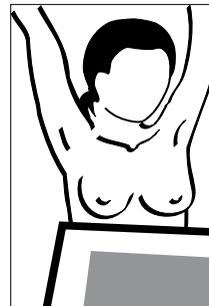
Next, lift them over your head, and watch for any contour changes such as



swelling, dimpling of the skin, or changes in the contour of the nipple. Check for any discharge from the nipples.

If you are examining with a partner, lean forward, and allow her to see if there are any changes in the contour while you change positions. Then place your

hands on your hips and press inward, flexing your chest muscles. Again, check for any contour changes. Expect your breasts to be slightly different from right to left—this is normal.

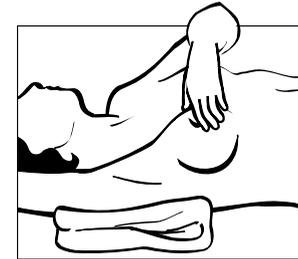


Why should I do a breast exam?

By doing a breast self-exam every month, you will get to know what your breasts look 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 health care provider.

3 Lying down:

Place a pillow or rolled towel under the right shoulder, and place your right hand over your head to evenly spread the breast tissue over the chest wall.



Some women find that using a few drops of massage oil makes it easier to examine their breasts. Even though it is not necessary, you might want to try using oil. Use the flat part of the middle three fingers of your left hand to examine your breasts.

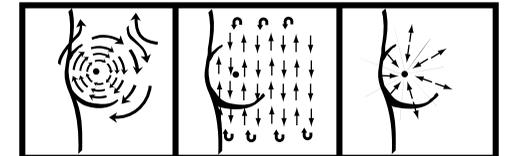
If you prefer your partner to examine your breasts, follow the same directions as part 3 (Lying Down) and use one of the patterns indicated below (if your partner is right handed, she should use her right hand; if left handed, she should use her left hand.)



What pattern should I use?

Examine your entire area of your breast, your collar bone, and your underarm. Remember, you are looking for a lump, thickening, or any new changes. Then repeat the procedure, including the positioning, for the left breast.

The pictures below show 3 patterns of breast self-exam. Choose the way which is most easy for you. Use that very same pattern each time you examine your breasts.



Look at your nipples. Do not squeeze them. Look for discharge or skin changes. Discharge can be clear or bloody. If there is discharge, see your health care provider right away.

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.