

How to do a breast self-exam



Early detection is key when it comes to successfully treating breast cancer. To spot any irregularities as early as possible, it's important to do a monthly breast self-exam. Follow these steps.

About 40% of breast cancers are detected by breast self-exams, according to a study in *Journal of Women's Health*. That's why you should do a breast self-exam every month. Examine yourself a few days after your period ends, when your breasts are least likely to be swollen, lumpy, and tender.

Step 1: Look at your breasts in a mirror.

Keep your arms by your side and look for any of the following changes:

Change in the nipple skin: Dryness, itching, redness, or oozing of fluid on the nipple could indicate a problem in the underlying breast.

Retraction of the nipple: If the nipple appears to be 'pulled-in' it could be a warning sign.

Changes in the skin of the breast: Dimpling, swelling, or change in the skin colour of the breast or armpit could also indicate breast cancer.

Step 2: Raise your arms.

Look for the same changes as in step 1.

Step 3: Lie down and feel your breasts.

- Lie down on your back, place a pillow under your right shoulder.
- Use your left hand to feel your right breast.
- Keep your fingers together and with firm pressure use gentle circular motions to feel your entire breast, from your collarbone to the top of your abdomen, as well as your armpit.
- Repeat these steps on your left breast.

During this step, you are looking for any lumps in your breast tissue. A lump does not always mean cancer. There are many other non-cancerous causes of a lumps (like fibrocystic disease).

However, if you do discover a breast lump, have it checked by your doctor.

Step 4: Feel your breast while sitting or standing.

It's a good idea to do this step in the shower when your skin is wet and slippery, as it's easier to feel anything odd. Feel the entire surface of your breast by following the same hand movements as in step 3.

If you are concerned about your breasts, even if the changes are not listed here, have them checked by your doctor. While it may not indicate breast cancer, rather put your mind at ease.



Look



Raise your arms



Lie down



Stand up