



## What's True? What's Myth?

Many women don't check their breasts. If you are one of them, make sure you know truth from myth. The more you learn, the more likely you'll be to do this simple self-exam.

"I'm too young for breast cancer."

You can get breast cancer at any age - even as young as 20. But your risk does increase after menopause. This is true whether or not you take hormones.

"But my doctor checks my breasts."

Your healthcare provider will never know your breasts as well as you do. Check your breasts monthly to learn what's normal for you.

"I'm afraid of what I might find"

Breast changes are not usually a sign of cancer. But whatever the cause, finding a problem early increases the chance that treatment will go well.



## Clinical Exams and Mammograms too

A complete breast health program also includes regular clinical breast exams and mammograms. If you're at higher risk for breast cancer, you may need clinical exams and mammograms earlier and more often. Talk to your healthcare provider.

### Clinical Breast Exams

A clinical breast exam is performed by a trained healthcare provider. Starting at age 20, you should have a clinical breast exam every 1 to 3 years. After age 40, have a clinical breast exam each year.

### Mammograms

A mammogram can show changes too small to feel. Have your first mammogram by age 40. After that, have a mammogram every year.

# Doing a Breast Self-Exam



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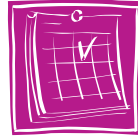
## Why examine your breasts?

Monthly exams help you get to know your breasts. This makes it easier to find breast changes. It also gives you a head start against potential problems. If you notice any breast changes, see your healthcare provider right away. It's the only way to confirm the health of your breasts.



## Breast Changes

- Most breast changes are not caused by cancer. However, some changes can signal other problems, such as:
- Fibrocystic changes (harmless but sometimes painful cysts)
- Infection (especially during breastfeeding)
- Noncancerous lumps



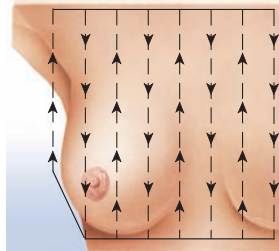
## Why examine your breasts?

Check your breasts about a week after your period starts. If you don't have periods, check your breasts on the same day each month. Contact your healthcare provider if you notice changes such as lumps or dimples. Be sure to mention any family history of breast cancer.

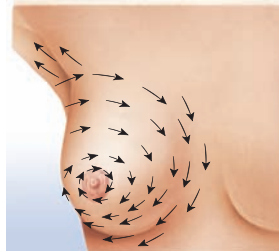
## Feel for Changes

Lie down with a pillow under one shoulder. Raise the arm on the pillow over your head. Then, follow these steps:

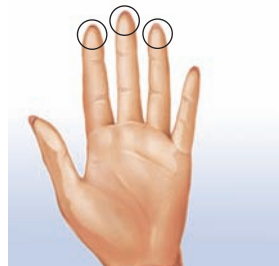
### Use a Pattern



- As you check your breast, use a pattern of strips or spirals that overlap a bit.
- Check from your collarbone to your bra line. Be sure to include your armpit and the area next to your breastbone.



- Move your fingers in dime-sized circles.
- Don't lift your fingers off the breast.



### Feel for Changes

Use the soft pads of your fingers, not the tips. Begin with light pressure. Repeat using medium pressure, then very firm pressure.

## Look for Changes

Some changes can be seen but not felt. To look for changes, stand in front of a mirror and follow these simple steps.

### Arms at Sides



Stand with your arms at your sides. Look for changes in the color or texture of your skin and nipple. Clasp your hands behind your neck and look again.

### Hands on Hips



Press your hands on your hips to flex your chest muscles. Look for new dimples, puckers, or any other changes. Check again, leaning forward from the hips and turning side to side.

## Look for Discharge

Nipple discharge that is dark or bloody, or that happens without squeezing your nipple, should be checked by your healthcare provider. Clear or milky discharge may be normal.