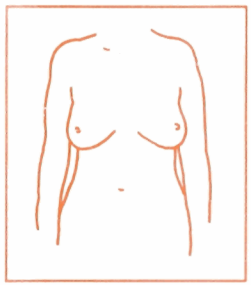
BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION (BSE)

STEP 1: INSPECTION

In front of a mirror with good lighting look at your breasts. Turn from side to side looking at your breasts.

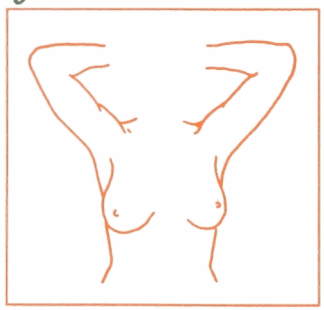
With arms relaxed at your sides



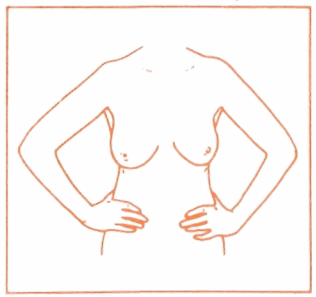
Look for any CHANGE in the size or shape of the breast, puckering or dimpling of the skin or CHANGES in the nipple such as scaling, CHANGE in the direction of the nipple or drainage.

With arms held over your head

Check to see whether breasts move up and down together. Lift your breasts to look for sores or dimpling.



With hands on hips



Pressing in to tighten the chest muscles. Turn from side to side to view all areas of your breasts. Look for any dimpling or puckering of the skin.

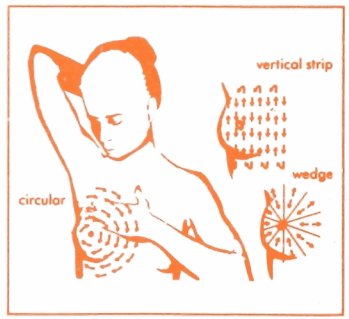
STEP 2: PALPATION OR FEELING



Be sure to use the flat surface or fat pads of the three middle fingers.

To examine your right breast, put your right hand behind your head, with the pads of the fingers of your left hand held flat and together firmly press on the breast using small circular motions. Imagine the breast as the face of a clock. Begin at the top, 12 o'clock, slide to 1 o'clock and so on, making a circle around the outer area of the breast. Move in one finger width, continue in smaller and smaller circles until you have reached the nipple. Cover all areas including the breast tissue leading to the underarm area. Reverse the procedure for the left breast.

The clock, or circular, method is described here, however, you should choose the method that is most familiar and comfortable for you.



In Shower or Bath



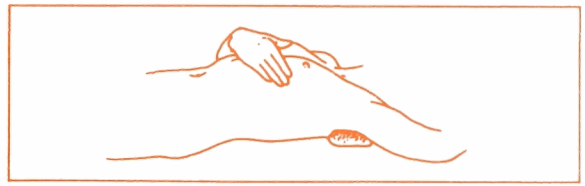
Fingers will glide over wet soapy skin, making it easier to feel any CHANGES in your breast for lumps, knots, tenderness or for any CHANGE.

Underarm Examination

Examine the left underarm area with your arm held loosely at your side. Cup the fingers of the opposite hand and insert them high into the underarm area. Draw fingers down slowly, pressing in a circular pattern covering all areas. Reverse the procedure for the right underarm.



Lying Down



While lying flat, place a small pillow or folded towel under the right shoulder and your right hand behind your head. Feel the right breast using the same circular motion as was used in the shower. Cover all areas. Repeat this procedure for the left breast.

Any CHANGE from the previous exam should be brought to the attention of your physician or health care provider.

BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION (BSE)

WHO? WHEN? WHY?

Who should do BSE?

* Everyone should learn and practice BSE starting in high school and continuing throughout their lives.
* Men do get breast cancer so they should also do BSE.
* People who have had a breast removed should do BSE and also examine the side of surgery.

When to do BSE?

* Women who are still having monthly periods should do BSE one week after the beginning of their menstrual period.
* Women who are breast-feeding should do BSE as soon as they have finished nursing their baby.
* Women who have had a hysterectomy who still have monthly swelling and tender breasts should do BSE after these symptoms go away. Women who do not have monthly symptoms should pick the same date each month.
* Men should do BSE on the same date of each month.

Why do BSE?

* To become familiar with your breasts.
* To find changes early.

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY GUIDELINES FOR EARLY DETECTION OF BREAST CHANGES

IF YOU ARE LESS THAN 40 YEARS OLD, THE ACS RECOMMENDS THAT YOU:

* Examine your breasts monthly
* Have a breast exam by your doctor at least every three years
* Have a mammogram by age 40

IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 40 AND 49 YEARS OLD:

* Examine your breasts monthly
* Have a breast exam by your doctor every year
* Have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years

IF YOU ARE AGE 50 AND OVER:

* Examine your breasts monthly
* Have a breast exam by your doctor every year
* Have a mammogram every year

CALL A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ABOUT ANY CHANGES:

- lump or thickening in breast or underarm
- puckering, dimpling or rash on breast or nipple
- change in nipple direction or a nipple discharge
- change in shape or contour of the breast

Remember, most breast changes are *not* cancer, but only a health professional can tell for sure.

CODE #246 LE-88 · REV. 94

BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION (BSE)



A PERSONAL PLAN OF ACTION

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY® NEW YORK STATE DIVISION, INC.