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## Breast self-exam

A breast self-exam is something a woman does at home to look for changes or problems in her breast tissue. Many women feel that doing this is important to their health.

However, experts do not agree about the benefits of breast self-exams in finding breast cancer or saving lives. Talk to your health care provider about whether breast self-exams are right for you.

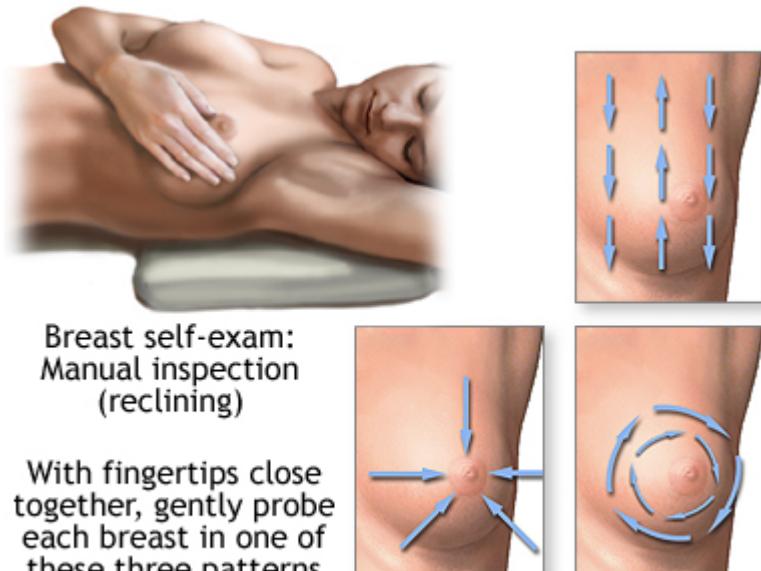
## Information

The best time to do a monthly breast self-exam is about 3 to 5 days after your period starts. Do it at the same time every month. Your breasts are not as tender or lumpy at this time in your monthly cycle.

If you have gone through menopause, do your exam on the same day every month.

Begin by lying on your back. It is easier to examine all breast tissue if you are lying down.

- Place your right hand behind your head. With the middle fingers of your left hand, gently yet firmly press down using small motions to examine the entire right breast.
- Next, sit or stand. Feel your armpit, because breast tissue goes into that area.
- Gently squeeze the nipple, checking for discharge. Repeat the process on the left breast.
- Use one of the patterns shown in the diagram to make sure that you are covering all of the breast tissue.



Breast self-exam:  
Manual inspection  
(reclining)

With fingertips close  
together, gently probe  
each breast in one of  
these three patterns

Next, stand in front of a mirror with your arms by your side.

- Look at your breasts directly and in the mirror. Look for changes in skin texture, such as dimpling, puckering, indentations, or skin that looks like an orange peel.
- Also note the shape and outline of each breast.
- Check to see if the nipple turns inward.

Do the same with your arms raised above your head.

Your goal is to get used to the feel of your breasts. This will help you to find anything new or different. If you do, contact your provider right away.

## Alternative Names

Self-examination of the breast; BSE; Breast cancer - BSE; Breast cancer screening - self exam, breast self-exam

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