

## The 5 steps of a self breast exam.

Self breast exams are pretty simple, but they're not always performed correctly. A thorough self breast exam involves more than a quick once over. To be truly effective, women's health experts recommend the following five-step process once a month to identify anything suspicious.<sup>1</sup>



1

### Stand and study yourself in the mirror

Start by taking a close look in the mirror. Stand up straight, place your hands on your hips and study your breasts. Here's what you should look out for:

- Visible lumps
- Any unusual or drastic differences in size and shape between the two breasts
- Dimpling or indentations in the breast tissue
- Redness, scaliness, or other changes to the skin or nipples that appear abnormal
- Changes to your nipples, such as one that's pushed in or pulling



If you notice any of these changes in your breast tissue, it's important that you follow up with your doctor right away.

#### HELPFUL HINTS:

Flex your elbows forward to help reveal lumps that might not appear otherwise. Keeping your hands on your hips, slowly swivel from side to side to catch possible abnormalities from more angles.



2

### Repeat with your arms overhead

Keep the same stance in front of the mirror, but now, raise your arms above your head and examine your breasts for the same changes in Step 1. Remember that left and right breasts will not exactly match, so look for any dimpling, puckering, or changes—particularly on one side. If you notice anything unusual, get in touch with your doctor immediately.



3

### Watch for discharge

Unless you're lactating, healthy breasts should not secrete fluid. Examine your breasts to see if fluid is coming out of one or both of your nipples. It could come in the form of a watery, milky or yellow fluid, or blood.

#### HELPFUL HINTS:

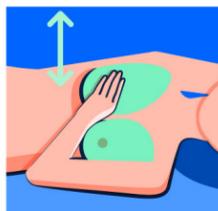
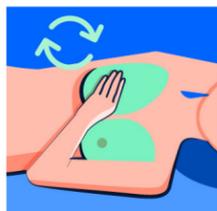
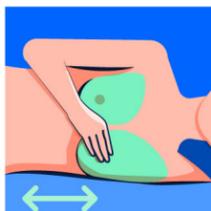
It may be easier to perform this step in the shower because your hands will more easily glide over wet skin.



4

### Lie down and examine each breast

Next lie down on your side. Prop up your head up with a pillow and rest your arm behind it. With the opposite hand, take the first three fingers—index, middle and ring fingers—and use them to press down around the breast and surrounding area using circular motions from the outside, in. Increase the pressure with each pass around the breasts to ensure you aren't just feeling superficial tissue.



Make sure to feel the whole breast from top to bottom (collarbone to the top of your abdomen) and side to side (armpit to cleavage). Then, switch sides and repeat the exam on the other breast.

#### HELPFUL HINTS:

Using three fingers, rather than just one, keeps you from mistaking normal breast tissue for lumps.<sup>1</sup>

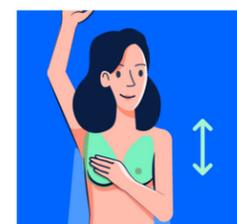


5

### Sit and examine each breast

Sit up and examine your breasts using the directions from Step 4.

Check the areas around your breasts, just as you did in the previous step. Continue to use circular motions and increasing pressure as you move from the collarbone to the sternum and down below the breast. From the lower part of the breast, move up to the area under your arm to look for any swelling in the lymph nodes.



#### HELPFUL HINTS:

You're looking for something that stands out and feels different than the surrounding breast tissue, like a pea, a marble, a walnut.

**Above all, make it routine.** Adult women of all ages are encouraged to perform a breast self-exam at least once a month.<sup>2</sup> The more you examine your breasts, the easier it will be to understand what's normal for you, and what isn't. Examine yourself several days after your period ends, when your breasts are least likely to be swollen and tender. If you're no longer having periods, choose a day that's easy to remember and stick with it. Either way, when you're consistent, knowing how your breast tissue should feel will become second nature—so you can pinpoint when something is off.