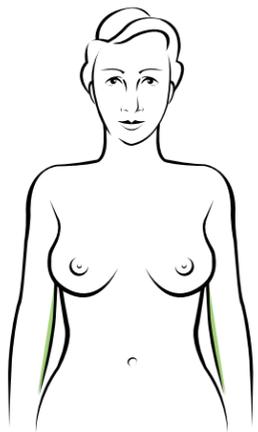


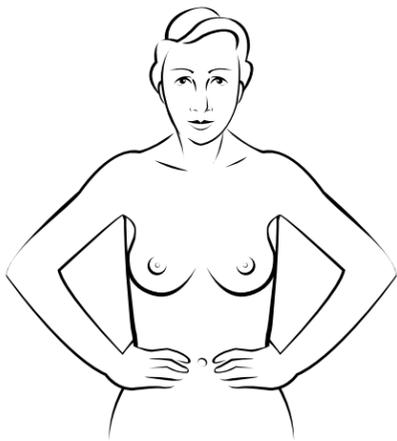
# Breast Self-Examination (BSE)

The best time to practice BSE is a few days after your menstrual period or the day you begin hormone replacement therapy each month. Your breasts will be less tender and swollen. Postmenopausal women should choose the most convenient or easily remembered time, such as the first or last day of the month. Choose a day each month that will be easy to remember and make breast self-examination a regular part of your good health routine. Breast self-examination is also important in women with breast implants.

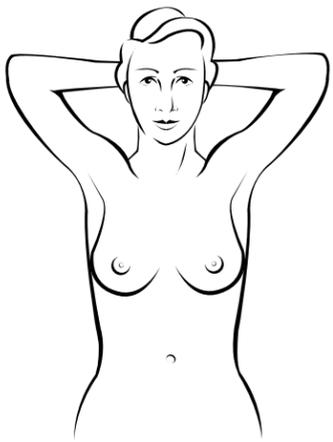
Steps A, B, and C are visual checks.



**A.** Stand before a mirror and look at both breasts. Check for anything unusual, such as nipple retraction, redness, puckering, dimpling, or scaling of the skin. Look for nipple discharge. Some discharge can be normal, due to hormones or medication. However, all discharge should be reported to your doctor. Note the color of the discharge, whether it came from both breasts and whether it came from one or more openings.



**B.** Next, press your hands firmly on your hips and lean slightly toward your mirror as you pull your shoulders and elbows forward with a squeezing or hugging motion. Look for any change in the normal shape of your breasts. Now, bend forward at the waist, hold your head up and look in the mirror. You may notice that one breast is larger than the other and this is normal.



**C.** Looking in the mirror, raise your arms and rest your hands behind your head. This allows you to see the underside of your breasts.



**D.** Place your left hand on your waist, roll your shoulder forward and reach into your underarm area and check for enlarged lymph nodes (small glands that fill with fluid when you have an infection). An enlarged node would feel like a corn kernel or a bean. Also check the area above and below the collar bone. Repeat on the right side.



**E.** Raise your left arm. Use the pads of three or four fingers of your right hand to examine your left breast. Use three levels of pressure (light, medium, and firm) while moving in a circular motion. Check your breast area using a set pattern. You can choose (1) lines, (2) circles or (3) wedges.



## 1. Lines

Beginning at the outer edge of your breast move your fingers downward using a circular motion until they are below the breast. Then move your fingers slightly toward the middle and slowly move back up. Go up and down until you go over the entire breast area.



## 2. Circles

Beginning at the outer edge of your breast use the flat part of your fingers, moving in circles slowly around the breast. Gradually make smaller and smaller circles toward the nipple. Be sure to cover the entire breast and check behind the nipple.



## 3. Wedges

Starting at the outer edge of the breast, move your fingers toward the nipple and back to the edge. Check your entire breast, covering one wedge-shaped area at a time.

You should not lift your fingers while feeling the breast to make sure no area is missed. Whatever method you choose, make sure to cover the entire area including the breastbone, collarbone, upper chest area, and bra line. Pay special attention to the area between the breast and the armpit itself. Feel for any unusual lump, mass or thickening under the skin. Repeat on the right side.



**F.** Lie flat on your back, left arm over your head and a pillow or folded towel under your left shoulder. This position flattens the breast and makes it easier to examine. Use the same motion described in step E. Some women like to use body lotion, cream or bath powder in this step.

Many women prefer to do steps D through F in the bath or shower. Soapy fingers glide easily over wet skin, making it possible to concentrate on how the tissue underneath your breasts feel.