

## HOW TO EXAMINE YOUR BREASTS

Examining your breasts once a month is an excellent health habit to begin during your teens. One out of 11 women will develop breast cancer one day (usually after age 40). Breast cancer has an excellent chance of cure if found early. Fortunately, most breast lumps in young women are *not* cancer.

There are three good reasons for doing monthly self-exams when you're young:

- It's easier to develop the regular habit
- You'll become comfortable with the normal variations in your breast tissue
- You'll be taking responsibility for your own health care.

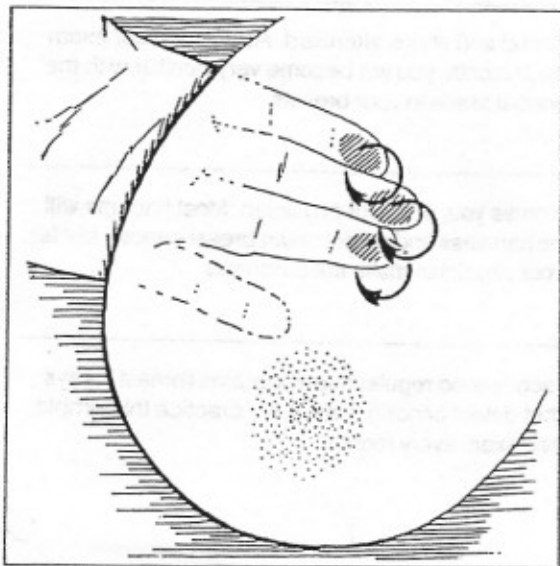
### When to do the exam

It is best to do the examination at the same time each month, immediately *after* your period is over. Your breasts will be the least tender or swollen

then. If you are taking birth control pills, the day you start your new pack each month is usually a good time for the exam.

### How to do the exam

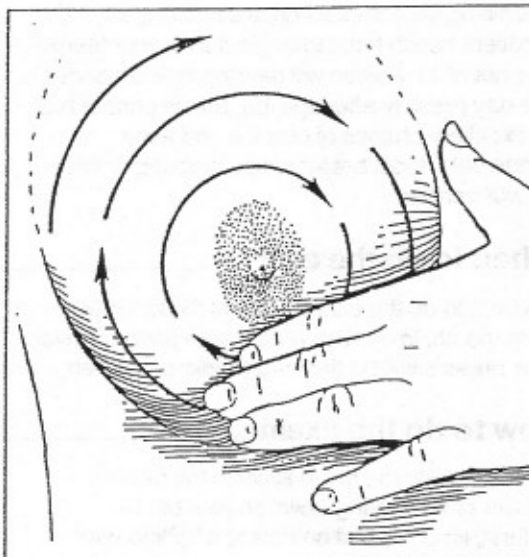
1. You can do the exam either in the bath or shower or while lying down on your back.
2. First, lift one hand and place it behind your head.
3. Hold the first three fingers of your left hand firmly together.
4. Press the outermost part of your right breast (near the armpit) firmly in a little circular motion with



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- the pads of your fingers. Then continue in a large circle all around your breast.
5. Move your fingers an inch closer to the nipple and feel another circle around the breast. Continue circling until you have felt every part of the breast, including the nipple.
  6. Squeeze the nipple gently to see if any fluid comes out.
  7. Now change hands and repeat the procedure for the other breast.

The drawings that accompany this instruction sheet will help you learn the self-examination technique.



**What you might feel**

Your breasts are made up of fat, glands, and fibrous tissue, with muscle tissue underneath. Occasionally tender cysts will develop before your

period and shrink afterward. As you do your exam each month, you will become very familiar with the normal tissue in your breasts.

**When to see your doctor**

If you find any lump or thickening that lasts over a month, or if you find fluid when you squeeze your nipples, or anytime you feel something that

worries you, see your physician. Most findings will be harmless and do not mean breast cancer, but let your physician make the diagnosis.

**As you get older**

After age 30, you will be taught a more detailed examination that can detect even smaller lumps. Also, after age 35 or 40, your doctor may

recommend regular mammograms (breast X-rays that detect cancer). Until then, practice this simple self-exam every month.