

SELF EXAMINATION OF BREAST

Self examination of breasts should be started as early as 20 yrs. of age by all females as it helps you know the regular or normal feel of your breast, so you can detect any abnormality earlier.

This method involves proper & careful inspection of breast while feeling the breast area with your hands for any lump or swelling.

The self-examination is performed by standing in front of a mirror with your upper body unclothed & both hands on sides or hands resting on hips, arms held overhead or lying down.

Even if u r obese you will know over the period of time what is regular or normal for you. If you are thin, you can finish entire examination standing, but lying down or changing position will help you cover the entire breast.

While **inspection**, one should compare both breast's size, shape, level of nipples, any obvious color change or any dimpling of nipples.

In **Palpation** (feeling with hands), woman will be using the pad of her fingers. The process should cover the entire breast, including tissues from the collar bones to axilla (armpit). You can also mentally divide the breast into four quadrants and check each quadrant separately. Finally, women who are not lactating can squeeze each nipple to check for any discharge.

While **lying down**: To examine your left breast, lie flat on your back with a pillow or folded towel under your left shoulder. Raise your left arm over your head.

Use the flat portions of the second, third and fourth fingertips of your right hand to examine your left breast with one of the above methods. Repeat for the right breast.

Pressure: Press gently to feel tissues under the skin and then more firmly for deep tissues.

Pattern: There are several examination patterns, and each woman should use the one which is most comfortable for her. The vertical strip pattern involves moving the fingers up and down over the breast. The pie-wedge pattern starts at the nipple and moves outward. The circular pattern involves moving the fingers in concentric circles from the nipple outward. Don't forget to palpate into the axilla.

Time: For menstruating women, breast examination should be done at around the same stage of their period every month to minimize changes due to the menstrual cycle. Menopausal women should do breast examination once a month, perhaps on the first or last day of every month, but a fixed date will be helpful to maintain and remember their schedule.

About eight in ten lumps discovered are harmless or benign. Nevertheless, any abnormality detected or suspected should promptly be reported to a doctor.

Self breast examination should be combined with an annual checkup by a doctor for better chances of detection.

BSE is not a replacement for mammography or MRI Breast in certain clinical conditions.