



Your life in your hands

Breast Self Examination

Ask your Doctor or Local Health department

OR CONTACT THE WOMENS NATIONAL CANCER CONTROL CAMPAIGN

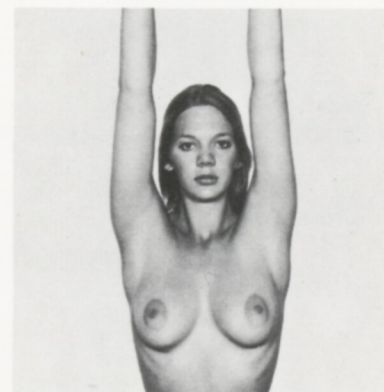
1. Undress to the waist and sit or stand in front of a mirror in a good light with your arms comfortably by your sides. If sitting, you may find it preferable to rest your hands lightly on your hips. Look at your breasts carefully; In the first examination you should note the normal size and shape of each breast and the position of the nipples so that you will be aware of any changes that might develop. In subsequent examinations you should look for any inequality in the size or shape of your breasts. Pay special attention to any alterations in the surface of the breast, such as a swelling, skin puckering (dimple), rash, discolouration or very prominent veins. Note whether either nipple is retracted (turned in).
2. Now place the hands lightly on the top of the head and again look at the breasts carefully, concentrating especially on the nipples. This position will emphasise any difference in size or shape between the two breasts. Look particularly for any excessive upward or outward movement of either nipple.



LOOK



LIFT



STRETCH

Inspection-How to look

Palpation-How to feel

You have completed the INSPECTION part of the examination and it is now time to feel for any abnormal lumps in the breasts. Again it is important at the first examination to note the normal consistency of your breasts, so that you will be aware of any change in subsequent examinations. Many women who have not yet reached the change of life normally have rather lumpy breasts just before the period and in some this may persist throughout the whole month. This may cause uncertainty at first, but with each successive examination it should become easier to decide whether any unusual lump is present.



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9. It is not easy to examine the most outer part of the breast with the arm by the side. When you have completed the first series of circular movements place the arm comfortably above the head with the elbow bent. Repeat the examination of all the breast now, paying especial attention to the outer part which can now be felt with more certainty. Never rush palpation of the breasts which must be done slowly gently and thoroughly.
10. The final part of the examination is of the so-called tail of the breast which extends towards the armpit. This can only be examined properly with the arm above the head. You have now completed palpation of one breast and this must be repeated for the other side.



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PRESS

3. Momentarily stretch the arms above the head. Again this will emphasise any difference between the two breasts.
4. Now place the hands firmly on your hips and, when you are comfortable, push inwards towards the hips. You should feel the muscles on the upper part of your chest beneath your breasts tighten when you do this. Look at the breasts carefully while you keep pressing. This movement will emphasise any puckering of the skin or any abnormal retraction of either nipple. Remember to look at the under surface of the breast during this part of the examination. It is often easier to stand up to do this properly.



5. Lie down comfortably on a firm surface with your head on a pillow. Place a folded towel under the shoulder slightly raising the side that you are going to examine first. The left breast is felt with your right hand and vice versa. The first part of the examination is done with the arm by the side. Feel with the flat of the pads of the middle three fingers. The fingers should be kept straight but the hand flexible. Each time you feel, the breast tissue should be pressed towards the chest wall. Firm but gentle pressure should be used.
6. 7. 8. The examination starts just above the nipple and continues outward in a spiral fashion around the breast. EVERY PART of the breast must be felt so that two or three complete circles will need to be made depending on the size of the breast. Any unusual discrete lump or nodule should be noted.

Having completed self-examination of your breasts you will have decided whether they remain unchanged or whether any unusual feature has appeared. To remind you of these features, they are again listed overleaf:

Inspection-How to look

RIGHT

LEFT

Palpation-How to feel

FILM

A short instruction film 'Your Life in Your Hands' which explains the techniques of breast self-examination, may be hired or purchased from the Women's National Cancer Control Campaign.

Write for details to:

Information Officer
Women's National Cancer Control Campaign
1 South Audley Street London W1.