



# The Center for Women

Obstetrics & Gynecology

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## *Breast Self-Examination*

### **You should examine your breasts because:**

- 95% of breast lumps treated by doctors are found by women themselves.
- Most women with breast cancer are cured if they are treated early.
- Most breast lumps are not cancerous.

### **What to look for:**

- Changes in size or shape of your breasts or the position of your nipples.
- Inward puckering of the skin or nipple.
- Sores or scaling on the nipple or areola (darker skin around the nipple).
- Redness of skin.
- Enlargement of skin pores.

### **How to look for changes:**

- Begin the exam in front of a mirror with your arms relaxed at your side or on your lap and look for the changes described above.
- Hold your arms straight over your head and repeat your inspection.
- Put your hands on your waist and push firmly inward & look once more for any changes.
- Gently squeeze the nipple of each breast and look for discharge.

### **What to feel for:**

- Any changes from previous exams.
- Any lump or thickening.

### **How to feel for changes:**

- Lie down and with flat of your fingers, feel for lumps, left hand on right breast, then right hand on left breast. Move fingers around breast as if it were a face of a clock, be sure to cover the entire breast from the outer edges to the nipple. “Walk” fingers thoroughly in concentric circles, then squeeze under nipple. Look for a lump or a knot that was not there before; quite hard, perhaps the size of a nickel or larger and the feel of your knuckle. Be sure to cover the entire breast.
- If any changes are noted, call your doctor.

### **When to do the exam:**

- Do the exam on the day your menstrual period ends.
- If you have reached menopause, examine your breasts on the same day each month, such as the first, fifteenth, or a day you’ll remember.
- If you are pregnant, examine your breasts on the same day each month.
- If you have had a hysterectomy and have monthly breast changes (swelling or tenderness), examine your breasts on the day these changes disappear.
- If you no longer have monthly breast changes, examine your breasts on the same day of each month.

Have your self-examination techniques checked by your doctor or other health professional.

***Be sure to continue to have regular check-ups with your physician.***