

Breast masses

A woman's breast tissue changes in size and consistency throughout her life. Factors such as age, monthly menstrual cycle, pregnancy, breast feeding, birth control, hormone therapy, menopause, or a bruise or blow to the breast can cause some of these changes; In addition, breasts vary in size, shape, and texture. It is normal for one breast to be larger than the other. As you examine your breast you will develop more confidence in knowing how your breasts normally feel and should be able to recognize any changes. If you find a change in your breast, do not let fear keep you from seeing your doctor. When breast cancer is found and treated early, a woman has more treatment choices and a good chance of complete recovery, so early detection is very important. Before your menstrual period begins, and during your period, you can have some tenderness, pain, or lumps in your breasts because extra fluid collects in the breast tissue.

You should call your doctor immediately for the following:

Increased in size of breast lump or breast area.

Hardening or firmness of the breast area.

Nipple discharge.

Bloody nipple discharge.

Tenderness after menses.

Pain in the breast.

Lumps under armpits.

Any change in the breast that concerns you.

How to do self breast exam?

Self breast examination should be done once a month. The best time to do the exam is 2 or 3 days after your period ends, when your breasts are least likely to be tender or swollen, If you no longer menstruate, pick a day, such as the first day of the month, to remind yourself it is time to do the breast exam.

1. Stand before a mirror and check each breast for any thing unusual, such as any discharge from the nipples, puckering, dimpling, or scaling of the skin.
2. Clasp your hands behind your head and press them forward. You should feel your chest muscles tighten. Look in the mirror at the shape and contour of your breasts. Again look for any changes in the size and shape of each breast and look for any swelling, dimpling, rash, discoloration, or other unusual changes in the skin.
3. Press your hands firmly on your hips and bend slightly toward the mirror as you pull your shoulders and elbows forward. You should feel your chest muscles tighten. Look for any change in the shape or contour of your breasts.
4. Gently squeeze each nipple and look for a discharge. If present, see your doctor.
5. While you are standing, raise your left arm. Use the pads of the fingers of your right hand to check your left breast and the surrounding area-firmly, carefully, and thoroughly. You can use lotion or powder to help your fingers glide easily over the skin. You can also do this exam while you are taking a shower your fingers will glide

easily over soapy skin. Feel for any unusual lump or mass under the skin. A lump is unusual if it has not been felt during earlier breast exams and it now stands out against the normal feel of your breast.

Repeat step 5 lying down. Lie flat on your back, with your left arm over your head and a pillow or folded towel placed under your left shoulder. This position flattens the breast and makes it easier to examine. Check the left breast and the area around it very carefully using one of the patterns described in step 5. Repeat the exam on the right breast.

It is very important to cover the entire breast and to pay special attention to the area between the breast and the underarm, including the underarm itself. Check the area above the breast, up to the collarbone and all the way over to your shoulder.

If you feel something in one breast that appears unusual or different from before, check to see if it is present in your other breast. If the same structure is in the same place in both breasts, the chances are good that your breasts are normal. If you find a lump a few days before or during your menstrual period, reexamine your breast when your periods end. Often a lump found at this time may be due to the normal collection of fluid during your period. If the lump doesn't disappear before your next period begins, see your doctor as soon as possible.