

# Breast Self-Exam

## HOW TO PERFORM MONTHLY EXAMS



The Show Me Healthy Women program is a joint project of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Grant Agreement #NU58DP007130. Alternate forms of this publication for persons with disabilities may be obtained by contacting Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 866-726-9926. Hearing and speech impaired citizens can dial 711.

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## Missouri's BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAM

### Free Cancer Screenings

#### ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

You may qualify for  
Show Me Healthy Women if you:



Are age 21-64.



Are uninsured or underinsured.



Meet income guidelines.



Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services

930 Wildwood Drive

PO Box 570

Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570

**Health.Mo.Gov**

**CANCER INFORMATION SERVICE**

866-726-9926

## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### Why do a breast self-exam?

There are many good reasons for doing a breast self-examination each month. It is easy to do. When you get to know how your breasts normally feel, you may be able to feel a change. With practice, it should take about 15 minutes each month. Early detection is the key to successful treatment and cure.

### When to do a breast self-exam?

The best time to do breast self-examination is right after your period, when breasts are not tender or swollen. If you do not have regular periods or sometimes skip a month, choose a day and do it the same time every month.

### Remember the ABCs of Breast Health

**A** screening mammogram

**B** reast self-examination

**C** linical breast examination

A breast self-examination can save your life. Most breast lumps are found by women themselves or their partners. Most lumps in the breast are not cancer. Any lump or change should be checked by a doctor.

*Early detection is your  
best protection!*

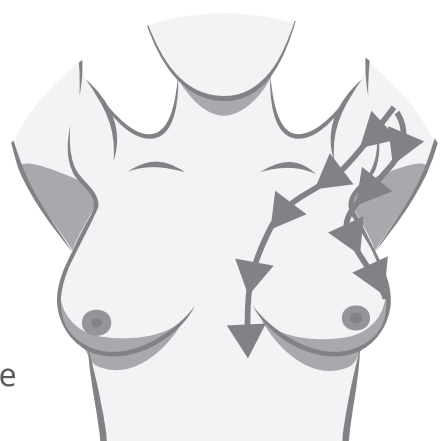
## CHECK YOUR LYMPH NODES

### Lymph nodes drain breast tissue

The lymph nodes that drain the breast tissue are located in three areas:

- Above your collar bone
- Below your collar bone
- In the armpit

You will want to know if any nodes are enlarged, movable or unmovable.



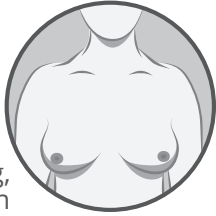
# Breast Self-Examination

## STANDING

*View in a mirror, looking at your front and both sides in each position below*

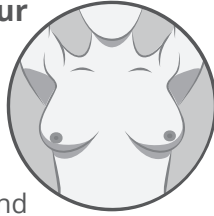
### Relax arms at your sides.

Look for changes in shape and color. View for puckering, dimpling, skin changes and nipple discharge.



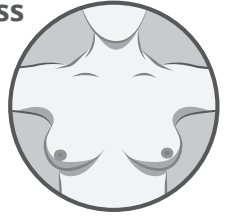
### Raise hands above your head.

Check again for puckering, dimpling and skin changes.



### Place hands on hips, press down, bend forward.

Check nipple direction and general appearance.



## LYING DOWN

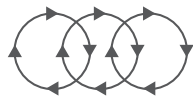
*Feel for changes while lying down - don't forget the seven Ps!*

### PALPATION

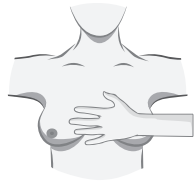
Use the pads of the middle three fingers of each hand to examine the breast on the opposite side - do not use fingertips - keep fingers together.



Move fingers in dime-size circles using the three levels of pressure in each spot.



Keep fingers, knuckles, and wrists straight.

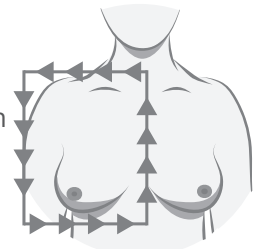


“Walk and slide” finger pads along so no breast tissue is missed.

### PERIMETER

The area to be examined include sides, top and bottom of breast.

Sides include the line from the middle of arm pit (axilla), that includes the area beyond breast fullness, down to the bottom bra line and over to the middle of the breast bone.



The top starts two finger widths above the collarbone.

Two finger-widths below the bra line indicates the bottom of the breast.

### PRESSURE

Lumps can occur at any depth. Use three levels of pressure to examine each spot thoroughly.



**Light** - Use very light pressure on the first dime-size circle. Pressure should be just enough to move the skin without

disturbing the tissue underneath. Pressing too hard at first could cause a lump to move out of the way.



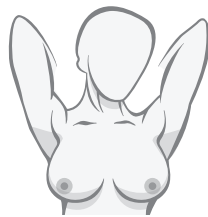
**Medium** - On the second circle, use medium pressure to feel for changes below the surface to mid-level of the breast tissue.



**Deep** - On the third circle, check for lumps deep in the breast tissue. Press as firmly as you can without discomfort. The goal is to feel the ribs with the deep pressure.

### POSITION

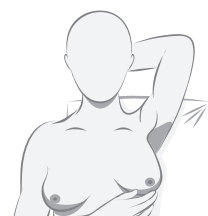
*Position 1: Spread the breast tissue evenly over rib cage.*



Turn on your side with knees bent. Lean shoulder back toward the outside (away from your hip) and put your hand on your forehead. Place a pillow under your lower back to make it more comfortable.

You are in the right position when your nipple seems to “float” at the top of the mound of your breast tissue.

*Position 2: When search pattern reaches the nipple, hold fingers in place on the nipple and roll back into a position flat on your back.*



The arm on the side being examined should now be extended directly away from the body (at a right angle).

### PATTERN

Use a vertical strip pattern to check the entire breast area.

Imagine mowing a lawn with straight, vertical, overlapping rows. When you reach the end of each row, move over about one finger width and start the next row.



Once you start, do not lift fingers from the breast area.

Be sure to examine the nipple with the same palpation technique you use to examine the rest of the breast tissue.



### PACE

Go slowly. Take your time.

Cover every square inch of the breast tissue. Performing breast self-exam every month could potentially save your life.

### PRACTICE

Practice makes perfect.

With monthly practice, you can become skilled at looking and feeling for changes in your breasts.

## PERFORM BREAST SELF-EXAM EVERY MONTH.