

Breast Self Examination (BSE)



P. D. HINDUJA HOSPITAL
& MEDICAL RESEARCH CENTRE

How to examine your breast?

Breast self examination (BSE) is a simple skill that may save your life! As implied, BSE is done by the woman herself. BSE should be performed each month at the same time about a week after the start of your period. Familiarity with the usual appearance and feel of one's own breast is important to notice any change such as a lump or thickening. Early discovery of a change from what is normal can be detected by BSE, as early discovery increases the chances of cure. All women from the age of 20 should do regular BSE.

How to do BSE?

- Look at your breasts in a mirror. Look for any changes in size or shape, retraction of nipple, dimple or thickening of skin or any obvious lump.
- Raising both your arms, look for any asymmetry in your breasts.
- Keep your hands around your waist and press them firmly. These positions may help in showing any retraction or dimpling present over the skin of the breast.
- Lie down with one of your arm stretched behind your head. Examine your left breast with your right hand and vice versa as shown in the picture. While palpating keep your fingers close to each other, use the flat surface of the fingers to feel for any lumps in the breast. Do not feel the breast between the finger tips and the thumb. Press firmly enough to know how your breast feels. A firm ridge at the lower curve of each breast is normal.
- Feel the whole breast in a systematic manner. The breast is divided into 5 parts; the upper inner area, upper outer area, lower inner area, lower outer area and the central area beneath the nipple. Feel all the parts of the breast without missing any area.
- In the same manner examine the other breast. If you find any changes, see your doctor right away. Lumps need to be investigated further.

If you find any abnormal change in your breast, do not panic seek your consultant's advice immediately. Remember BSE is not a substitute for regular mammograms or regular examination by a doctor.

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