



### Importance of Breast Self Examinations

In May 2003, the American Cancer Society changed its recommendations on Breast Self Examinations. They now say it's an optional exam for breast cancer detection rather than a mandatory one. The new guidelines emphasize an overall familiarity with your breasts so changes can be identified as they happen.

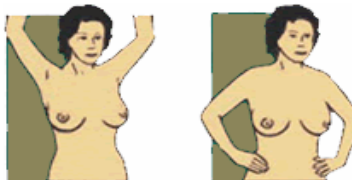
Since 90% of breast lumps are found by women themselves, there are still significant advantages to performing monthly BSEs. They increase the chances that you'll identify a lump while it's small and the cancer is most likely to be cured. Remember, most breast lumps do not turn out to be cancer. It's also important to note that while BSEs are a significant component of breast cancer screening, they are not a replacement for Clinical Breast Exams and mammograms.

### Timing of Breast Self Examinations

Women should begin breast self examinations in their teen years and continue throughout their lifetimes. The exam should be performed every month, 3-4 days after your period ends. After menopause or a hysterectomy, choose a specific day each month to do your exam.

#### Stand in front of a mirror

- Raise both arms and look at your breasts for changes such as dimpling, rash, discoloration, puckering of skin or nipple, nipple discharge or any changes from normal.
- Press hands on hips to tighten chest muscles and look at your breasts again for the same changes.



#### Stand or sit in the shower or bathtub

- Raise your right arm over your head
- Slide your wet, soapy left hand over your right breast while feeling for changes or a specific area that feels completely different from the surrounding tissue.
- Examine your left breast in the same manner

#### Lie down flat on your back

- Place your right arm above your head.
- Examine the right breast with the three middle fingers of your left hand held flat.
- Using the vertical strip pattern start in the armpit area. Cover entire chest from the armpit to the sternum, and the collar bone to below the breast.
- Move your fingers in dime size circles using light, medium and firm pressure at each area.
- Examine your left breast in the same manner.



#### BSE Tips

- Create a "mental map" of your breast. Each month, check for changes to that map.
- Normal breast tissue has a general lumpy feel, possibly like cottage cheese.
- Discomfort, especially at the time of a menstrual period or with menopausal hormone replacement, is common and almost always normal.
- Do not squeeze nipples; note any spontaneous nipple discharge.