

# BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION

## Background

Breast cancer has a higher survival rate the earlier it is detected and one of the best ways to detect breast lumps is to perform monthly breast self-examinations.

Despite this, it is estimated that only 33% of women actually perform routine breast exams. A survey carried out by Women's & Breast Imaging found that only 17% of Western Australian women conducted monthly breast self-exams; although many do bimonthly or six monthly self exams. Most worrying is that 31% of those surveyed had never conducted a breast self exam.\*

Women's & Breast Imaging encourages women of all ages to conduct monthly breast checks, and to know what is normal for their breasts. The following is a guide for doing just that. So make it a monthly routine - it could save your life!



Women's  
& Breast  
IMAGING

*Caring commitment to women's health*

## Location

**Cottesloe**

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## How-to-Guide



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# How to do a breast self examination



## When should I perform a breast self examination?

On a monthly basis; the best time is a week after your period begins because breasts are less lumpy and tender at that time. For those not menstruating, perform the check on the same day every month. It is very important for a woman to know what is normal for her own breasts.

## What is a breast self examination?

A breast self examination consists of:

- Manual examination (or palpation) while standing or lying down.
- Visual examination in the mirror.

This should be done every month. Women should know what is normal for their breasts, and the self-examinations will help them to detect changes in their breasts.

## How do I do a breast self examination?\*

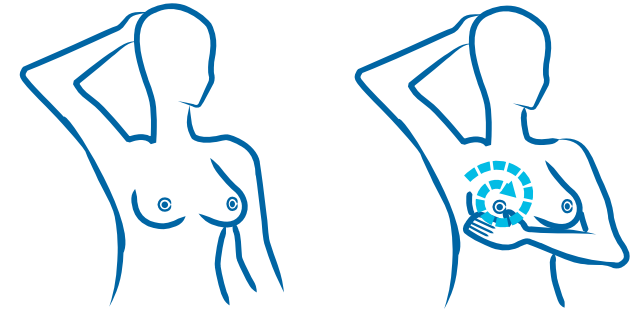
### The lying down self exam



- Lie in a comfortable position on your back with your arm raised above your head.
- Place a pillow under the side being examined to evenly spread the breast tissue.
- With your fingers flat against your breast tissue and using gentle and then firm pressure, move your fingers in small circles, ensuring you cover the entire breast. Remember your breast tissue extends up to your collarbone and up to your armpits, and don't forget the nipple area.
- Examine your right breast with your left hand and the left breast with your right hand.
- We suggest using a gel or body oil on the skin for easy movement of fingers over the breast.

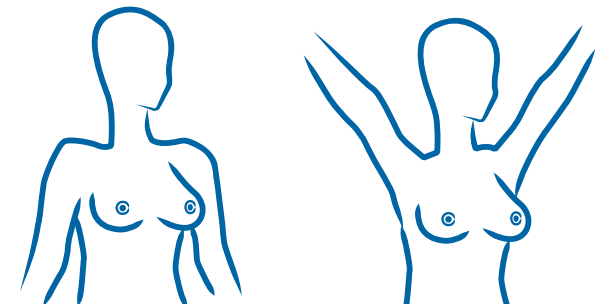


### The shower/standing self exam



- Place your hand behind your head .
- Using the same technique as described in the lying down self exam, examine each breast.
- This method can be done while in the shower – your soapy hands will glide easily over wet skin.

### The mirror self exam



- With arms at your sides, look carefully for changes or differences in the appearance of each breast. Look for dimpling, puckering and skin changes especially around the nipple. Repeat this procedure with your arms raised above your head.
- Lean over and observe your breasts again for any changes. We suggest using a gel or body oil on the skin for easy movement of fingers over the breast.

\* We recommend a combination of all three techniques.