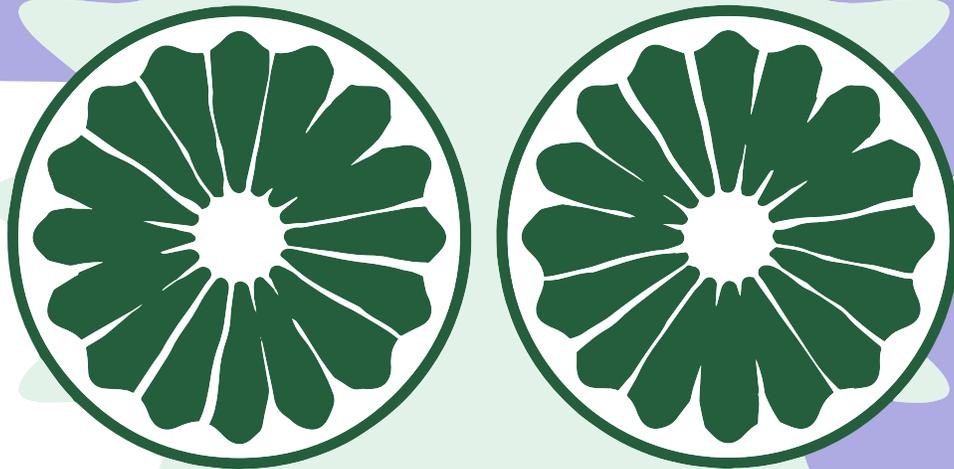


Rescripted.

How to do a breast self-exam



By Zara Hanawalt

When it comes to performing breast exams at home,
the guidelines can be confusing.

Some findings (most notably, a review of existing research conducted in 2008) suggest that self-exams don't reduce a person's risk of dying from breast cancer. On the other hand, self-exams can help women become familiar with how their breasts look and feel, so they can alert their healthcare providers if there is any change.

As women, we're all familiar with medical gaslighting. We know what it's like for our concerns to be minimized. And we know how powerful — lifesaving, even — knowing our own bodies and taking our health into our own hands (in this case, literally) can be.

The bottom line here? While it's important to note that breast self-exams are not a replacement for diagnostic screenings like mammograms or breast ultrasounds, they can be an important step for women to take each month in order to take control over their health.

Here's how to complete a breast self-exam:



First of all, you'll want to completely undress from the waist up and position yourself in front of a mirror. While some people like to feel for lumps in the shower, standing in front of a mirror instead can allow you to really see what's going on.



Place your hands on your hips and look in the mirror, checking for any irregularities. Here are a few things to look out for:

- Any changes in size, shape, or color of your breasts or nipples.
- Skin Irregularities, like dimpling or puckering, as well as any noticeable bulges.
- Redness, swelling or rashes anywhere on the breasts.
- Nipple changes — if your nipples are pointing in a different direction than they typically do, you'll want to take note of that.



Raise arms overhead and look out for any of those changes again.



Look out for any discharge from the nipples. Whether while completing your breast self-exam, or at another time, any discharge, fluid, or blood coming from your nipples should be evaluated.



Lie down on your back and feel for lumps around your breasts. Move across your body diagonally (so your right hand will feel your left breast, and vice versa) and move your fingers in a circular motion across both breasts, feeling for any lumps or irregularities. Start at the nipple and move outward, making sure you feel all the way around both breasts. Any lumps or other abnormalities should be discussed with a doctor.



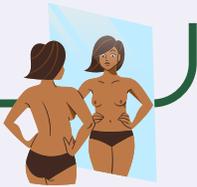
Repeat this process while sitting up or standing.

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A few things to keep in mind:

01

First and foremost, any usual findings don't necessarily mean you have breast cancer. It's entirely possible that what you're seeing or feeling has another cause. However, it's important to run any concerns by a doctor.

02

The #FeelItOnTheFirst movement encourages women to perform a breast self-exam every month, on the first day of the month. This makes it easy to remember and get in the habit of checking for any irregularities.

03

While breast self-exams can be a really powerful tool, remember: They can't take the place of diagnostic tests like mammograms and breast ultrasounds. Remember to schedule your annual screening if you're due for one.

