

# BreastTalk.co.uk How To Perform A Self Breast Examination

According to a survey that BreastTalk.co.uk ran in 2005 only 8% of women say they examine their breasts on a regular basis. Around 20% said they self examined once a year. 75% of women said they were not sure what they had to look for when examining their breasts. Hopefully by the end of this fact sheet you'll know exactly how to examine your own breasts and also know what to look for.

## Breast Cancer Stats

Approximately 42,000 (2006 figures) women are newly diagnosed with Breast Cancer each year in the UK and its increasing by around 1% each year. With Breast Cancer claiming 12,400 lives each year in the UK its vital that you self examine on a regular basis.

## What Age Do I Start Self Examination?

Even though 80% of Breast Cancer is found in women aged over 50, I'm of the opinion that the younger the better. As soon as you have boobs start looking at them and finding out how they feel. This way in later life you'll notice changes a little easier. If you are in your 50's already then you should be doing a self examination every month.

## The Five Point Breast Examination Code

1. Know what is normal for your breasts.
2. Know what changes to look and feel for.
3. Look and feel your breasts regularly.
4. Tell your GP about changes straight away.
5. Get regular breast screening if over 50.



## What To Look For in An Examination

**Size** - If one of your breasts becomes larger or lower than the other then consult your GP. Remember though that one breast is usually bigger than the other so look for changes and not what's normal.

**Nipples** - Look for changes in your nipples. If one becomes inverted or pulled in or changes position or shape then contact your GP. Remember that its normal for some women to have inverted nipples so look for changes.

**Rashes** - If you develop a rash around one of your nipples then go and see your GP.

**Discharge** - If there is any discharge from your nipples then consult your doctor.

**Skin Changes** - Look for any changes in the skin of your breasts. Watch for dimpling for puckering of the skin and if you find any consult your doctor.

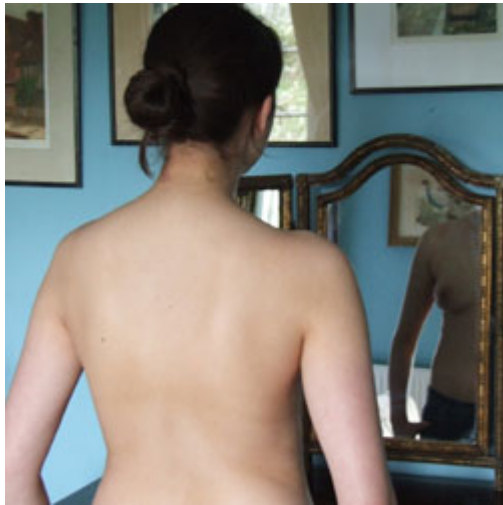
**Swelling** - If you develop any swelling under your armpits or around your collarbone, where your Lymph nodes are, then go and see your GP.

**Pain** - If you have continuous pain in one part of your breast or your armpit then consult your doctor.

**Lumps or Thickening** - If you notice a lump or thickening in your breast that is not the same as the tissue around it then go and see your GP.

## Performing A Self Examination

If this is your first time examining your breasts then make a few notes in a diary. Note the shape of your breasts and how each breast hangs compared to the other. Note the position of your nipples and their colour and texture. Write this down in your diary so you have something to compare it to in the future.



### Step 1

Stand in front of a mirror with your hands on your hips and look at your breasts.

Look carefully for any changes in their appearance such as one breast being lower than the other or one breast has got larger than the other.

Also look at the nipples and notice if they have changed position at all.

Make a note of any changes in a diary so that you can refer to them during your next examination.

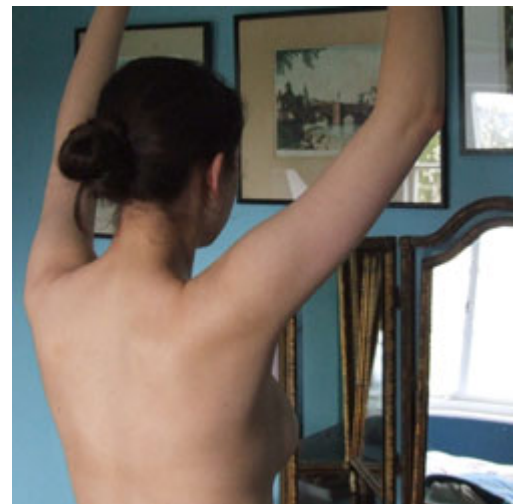
### Step 2

Repeat the same observations in step one but with your hands above your head.

This is a really good way to notice any changes in shape or texture as it stretches the skin out and flattens the breasts slightly which can help give better indications of any changes.

Make sure you look for changes in size and note if one of your breasts hangs lower than the other.

Also look at your nipples and check the size and position.



### Step 3

Lie down on a bed with your head slightly supported and using your fingers examine around all of your breast.

Lying down spreads out the tissue of your breast evenly and gives you a chance to press gently into all of the breast and notice any changes.

Move your fingers around firmly in a circular motion until all of your breast has been examined. Repeat the same for your other breast.

Remember to make a note of all changes.



**Step 4**

Standing up raise your one arm above you and using the tips of your fingers press gently but firmly around your breast tissue.

Do this around all of your breast and if you spot any changes write them down in your diary.

Repeat this step with your other breast.

**Step 5**

Perform a thorough examination on your nipples. You may want to do this in front of a mirror so you can see more.

Look at your nipples and make sure there are no rashes and that they are in the correct position.

Note all changes in your diary.

Always remember to visit your GP if you have any questions regarding breast health. Its really important that you understand your breasts and your GP won't mind answering questions. Being able to spot problems early is vital.