

Breast awareness

Do you know how to examine your breasts?

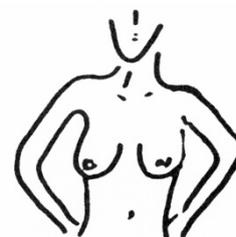
Breast Care Unit

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

Looking

1. Undress to the waist and sit or stand in front of a mirror with your arms to the sides. Turn from side to side to examine the whole breast.
2. Raise your arms above the head and look again. Note anything unusual, particularly around the nipple.
3. Press hands on hips and press inwards until your chest muscles tighten. Look for any puckering or dimpling of the skin.
4. Check for any discharge from the nipple.



Feeling

1. Lie on your bed with your head on a pillow and a folded towel under your left shoulder. Use the right hand to examine the left breast.



2. Keep the fingers together and use the flat of the fingers not tips.



3. Press the breasts gently but firmly feeling for any unusual lump or thickening. Examine in a spiral beginning around the nipple and working outwards. Feel every part of the breast.



4. Finish by feeling the tail of the breast moving the examining fingers up towards the armpit. Now repeat using the left hand to examine the right breast.



When to check

Check your breasts every month just after your period. If you do not have periods, choose a day which you will remember such as the first of the month.

What to check for

Remember you are looking for any change in your breasts which is unusual for you.

The first time you make the examination, note:

1. The normal size and shape of your breasts.
2. The normal position and appearance of your nipples.
3. The normal feel of your breasts.

Now look for:

1. Change in the size of either breast.
2. Change in either nipple.
3. Bleeding or discharge from either nipple without squeezing.
4. Unusual dimple or puckering on breast or nipple.
5. Veins which stand out more than is usual for you.
6. Lump or thickening when you feel your breasts.
7. Redness or rash to breast or nipple.
8. Constant breast pain (although pain is only a symptom of breast cancer in rare cases).
9. A swelling under your armpit or around your collarbone.

Any problems

If you find any of these changes, see your doctor at once. Most breast trouble is NOT cancer but due to simple cysts or lumps which can be treated easily, but may cause discomfort if not dealt with.

Even if you have an early cancer, prompt treatment gives you the best chance of cure.

Never put off going to the doctor. It could save your breast or your life.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comment forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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