

**BE AWARE  
OF CHANGE**

**Changes in the Breast  
... and what to look for**

---

No. 8 in a series of **Help Yourself** leaflets

---

**By looking at and feeling  
your breasts monthly  
you will be aware of any change.**

There can be many reasons for changes in the breast - most being harmless - but in some cases they may be the first sign of cancer.

### **Normal breast changes**

Before the menopause, the milk producing tissue in the breasts becomes active in the days before a period starts. In some women, the breasts at this time feel tender and lumpy, especially near the armpits. These changes may be particularly noticeable in the few years before the periods cease.

- Women who have had a hysterectomy usually have the same monthly breast changes until the time when their periods would have finished.
- The best time to check your breasts is when a period has just finished.
- After the menopause, check on the same date of each month.

**Check your breasts monthly**

Not more often

- you may miss small changes.

## **LOOKING**

- Undress to the waist - stand in front of a mirror (one breast may be larger - this is quite normal).

*Are the breasts different in any way?*

- Lean forward.

*Does one breast move differently?*

- Lift your breasts upwards.

*Does this cause dimpling of the skin on top of the breast?*

- Press hands on hips, relax and press again.

*Does this produce any dimples or flat areas on one breast?*

*Do the nipples point in different directions, or is one pulled in?*

- Stretch arms above your head.

*Does this cause any of these shape changes?*

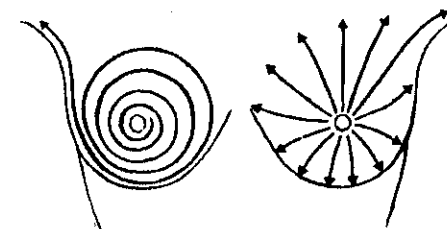
**? Yes - Tell your Doctor**

## **FEELING**

Use whatever method suits you best.

Some women like to use soapy fingers when in the bath or shower. Others lie on the bed with one hand above the head, rolling over a little till the nipple is in the centre of the breast. This makes feeling easier.

- Use the fingers of one hand to feel all parts of the opposite breast, feeling right out into the armpit.
- Feel both breasts. Cover the whole breast systematically, either in circles or like the spokes of a wheel.



You are feeling for a lump or an area of thickening or lumpiness which is not there in the same part of the other breast, or was not found when you last felt your breasts.

**If there is a change  
- tell the doctor**

# BREAST PROBLEMS

When to see a doctor:

- **Feelings**

Odd feelings, discomfort or pain in one breast, particularly if new and persistent.

- **Nipple Change**

Discharge, new for you and not milky. Bleeding or moist reddish areas which don't heal easily. Any change in position - pulled in or pointing differently.

- **Look For**

Any differences between the appearance of the two breasts, especially those caused by arm movements, or by lifting the breasts.

- **Feel For**

Any part of one breast which seems to be different from the same part of the other breast. Lumps, thickening, bumpy areas. Very important if new.

- **Be aware**

of slight changes that MIGHT mean a SMALL cancer, which after treatment has an excellent outlook.

Tell the doctor who will arrange for you to have your breasts checked. For older women, this will probably include a mamogram (a special breast X-ray which can show very early cancers).

**You are not wasting anyone's time**

Information leaflets are available from the Wessex Cancer Trust on many aspects of cancer, including cancer prevention, early detection and treatment options.

Copies are available by telephoning  
(02380) 672200.

Please ask for a full list of titles and an order form.

*Leaflet reprinted: July 1999*

*Design: Rhona Slattery*



Produced as part of the Wessex Cancer Trust's Information Service ©

We depend upon voluntary contributions to maintain our cancer information service for patients and the public. We need your help to help others; and would welcome your financial support.

**WESSEX CANCER TRUST**

Bellis House, 11 Westwood Road,  
Southampton SO17 1DL  
Tel. 023 8067 2200 Fax. 023 8067 2266  
web site <http://www.wessexcancer.org>  
e-mail: [wct@wessexcancer.org](mailto:wct@wessexcancer.org)

Registered Charity No. 2800133