



*Love your
body, love
yourself*



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Caring for Your Breasts

Women are encouraged to take care of their breasts especially because breast cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in women. While the causes of breast cancer are not yet fully understood, research shows that you can lower your risk of developing the disease or dying from it by minimizing lifestyle and environmental risk factors and through breast cancer screening.

Risks of Developing Breast Cancer

While some women will never develop breast cancer, others are not so fortunate. Naturally, some women are more at risk than others. It is therefore appropriate to know what risk you do have. However, every woman should be breast aware irrespective of the risk level she has.

Known Risk Factors for Breast Cancer

- Gender: More than 99% of breast cancers occur in women
- Age: risk increases as you get older
- Early menstruation (before the age of 12)
- Late menopause (after age 55)
- Having a first baby after age 30 or never having a baby
- Having a close relative with breast cancer
- Being physically inactive
- Being overweight

Possible Risk Factors

- Eating too few fruits and vegetables
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Never breastfeeding
- Tobacco exposure
- Using birth control pills
- Taking hormone replacement therapy for a long period of time

Choose a healthy lifestyle! You can enjoy a much healthier life if you opt to make healthy choices.

Here are some simple changes you can make:

- Be physically active. Studies show that even moderate physical activity can reduce your risk by 30 to 40 per cent. Choose an exercise or an activity that makes you feel warm and breathe harder (such as brisk walking) for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Lose excess weight. A 5kg increase in body weight can be a significant breast cancer risk factor, especially after menopause.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables. A lower-fat diet that includes five to ten servings of fruits and vegetables every day will minimize your risk for several types of cancer, including breast cancer.
- Limit your intake of alcohol. Women who drink alcohol have a slightly higher risk. The more you drink, the greater the risk.
- Breastfeed your baby. Breastfeeding seems to offer some women protection against breast cancer and it's good for the baby. Breastfeed for at least six months.
- Quit smoking. Smoking tobacco and breathing second-hand smoke have been linked to breast cancer.
- Weigh the risks and benefits of taking birth control pills. Taking birth control pills may slightly increase your risk of breast cancer if you are a long term pill user and began taking birth control pills at a young age. Since birth control pills also offer benefits, discuss this with your doctor.
- Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). HRT can relieve symptoms of menopause. Using HRT for a long time may increase your risk of breast cancer.

Minimizing Your Risk

Some of the risk factors mentioned are beyond your control, such as your age, your family history or your reproductive history. There are some risk factors, however, over which you have total control. Once you decide you want to make the healthy choice for your health, you can reduce your risk substantially by making positive changes to your lifestyle.

The Following are Not Recognised as Risk Factors for Breast Cancer

- Having breast implants to change your breast size or shape, or to rebuild a breast after surgery.
- Using deodorant or antiperspirant.
- Wearing or not wearing a bra.
- Wearing an under wired bra.
- Size and/or lumpy breasts.

Recommendations for Early Detection of Breast Cancer

- Women age 20 or older should perform breast self-examination every month. By doing the exam regularly, you get to know how your breasts normally feel and you can detect any signs or symptoms more readily.
- Women over 30 should have a clinical breast examination by a health professional while continuing their breast self-examination monthly.
- All women are encouraged to consult their doctor if and when they have any doubts or suspicions.
- Mamography is a screening tool for the early detection of breast cancer.

Examining your breasts

You need to follow these easy steps:

It is wise to learn how to examine your breasts from the age of 20. It is not a difficult procedure to do and it will be easier and will feel more natural with practice.



1. Look at your breasts in the mirror.

- The first time, study how they look and feel.
- As you examine yourself regularly, look for any changes.
- Visual changes may include changes in size, nipple inversion or nipple discharge, nipple pulling to one side, changes in the skin, dimpling or bulging



2. Repeat Step 1 in different positions.

- Stand with your arms by your side
- Stand with your arms over your head
- Stand with your arms on your hip
- Bend forward slightly

3. Examine your breasts lying down

a) Right breast

- Place a pillow under your right shoulder
- Place your right hand under your head
- Using the pads of the fingers of your left hand, check the entire breast
- Move round in circles, starting from the nipple and move outward
- Include also the armpits
- Squeeze each nipple for any discharge



b) Left Breast

- Repeat as for right breast but use right hand now.



4. In the shower

- You may feel more comfortable examining your breast in the shower
- Examine one breast at a time with soapy fingers
- Use circles in up and down movements but cover entire breast

Examine your breasts on the same day every month! If you find anything that bothers you, go to your doctor immediately.

Remember, examining yourself may save your life!