



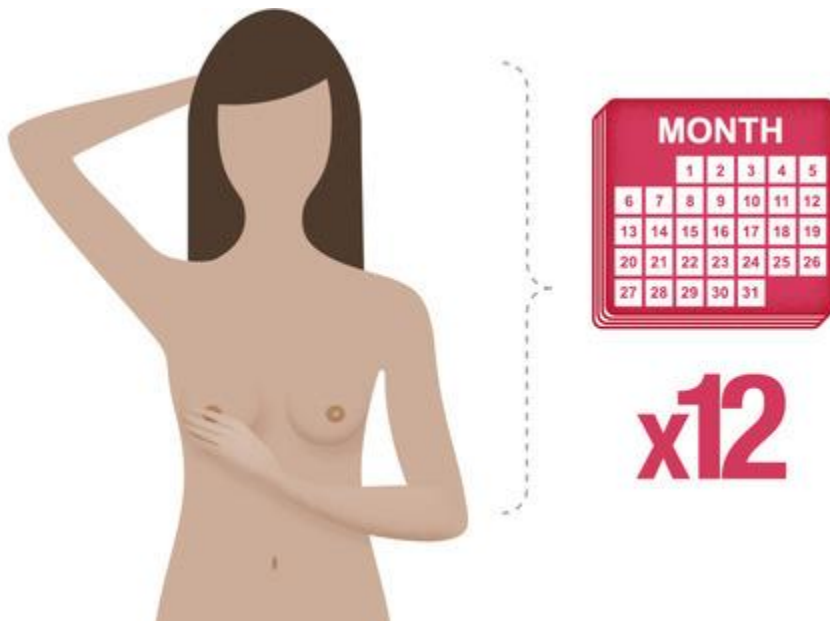
Original Link: <http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-self-exam>

## Once a Month

Adult women of all ages are encouraged to perform breast self-exams at least once a month. Johns Hopkins Medical center states,

*“Forty percent of diagnosed breast cancers are detected by women who feel a lump, so establishing a regular breast self-exam is very important.”*

While mammograms can help you to detect cancer before you can feel a lump, breast self-exams help you to be familiar with how your breasts look and feel so you can alert your healthcare professional if there are any [changes](#).

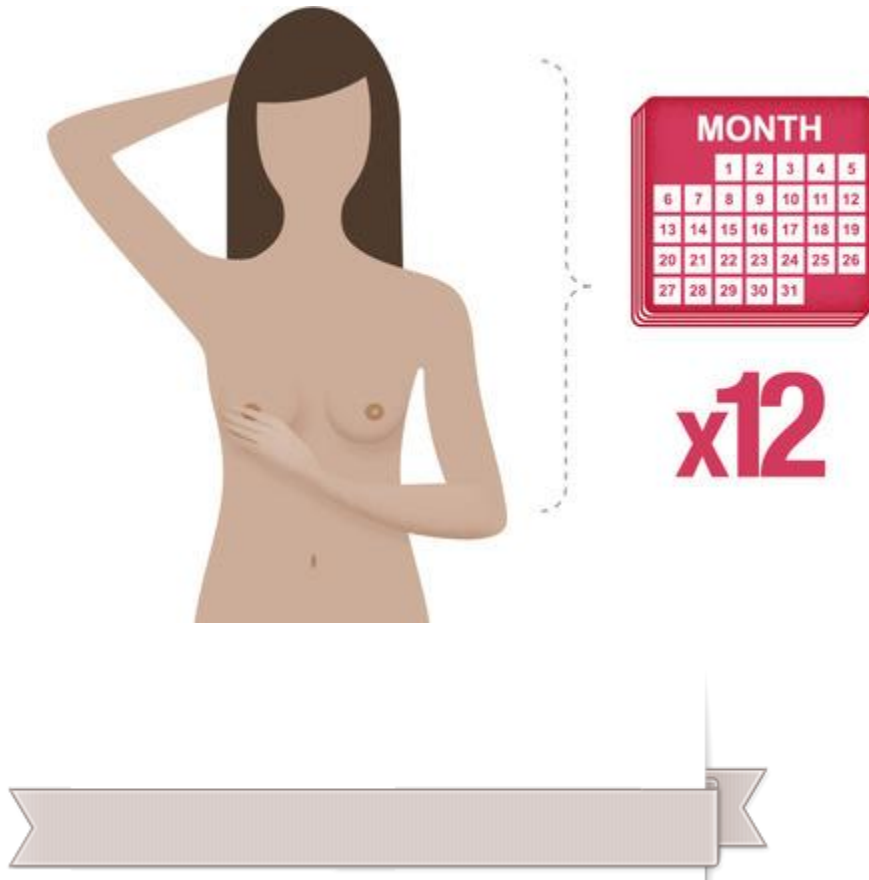


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## How should a breast self-exam be performed?

### 1) In the Shower

Using the pads of your fingers, move around your entire breast in a circular pattern moving from the outside to the center, checking the entire breast and armpit area. Check both breasts each month feeling for any lump, thickening, or hardened knot. Notice any changes and get lumps evaluated by your healthcare provider.

## **2) In Front of a Mirror**

Visually inspect your breasts with your arms at your sides. Next, raise your arms high overhead.

Look for any changes in the contour, any swelling, or dimpling of the skin, or changes in the nipples. Next, rest your palms on your hips and press firmly to flex your chest muscles. Left and right breasts will not exactly match—few women's breasts do, so look for any dimpling, puckering, or changes, particularly on one side.

## **3) Lying Down**

When lying down, the breast tissue spreads out evenly along the chest wall. Place a pillow under your right shoulder and your right arm behind your head. Using your left hand, move the pads of your fingers around your right breast gently in small circular motions covering the entire breast area and armpit.

Use light, medium, and firm pressure. Squeeze the nipple; check for discharge and lumps. Repeat these steps for your left breast.



*In the shower*



*In front of a mirror*



*Lying down*



*"There's some things in life you have to share. You have to have someone to lean on, and they'll help you get through."*

After performing a breast self-exam, Bonnie Brooks discovered a lump and immediately scheduled an appointment with her doctor. On September 11, 2008, she was diagnosed with Stage 3 metastatic breast cancer.

Watch Bonnie's inspirational story and learn more about how she overcame breast cancer.

## **Can I rely on breast self-exams alone to be sure I am breast cancer free?**

[Mammography](#) can detect [tumors](#) before they can be felt, so screening is key for early detection. But when combined with regular medical care and appropriate guideline-recommended mammography, breast self-exams can help women know what is normal for them so they can report any changes to their healthcare provider.

If you find a lump, schedule an appointment with your doctor, but don't panic — 8 out of 10 lumps are not cancerous. For additional peace of mind, call your doctor whenever you have concerns.