

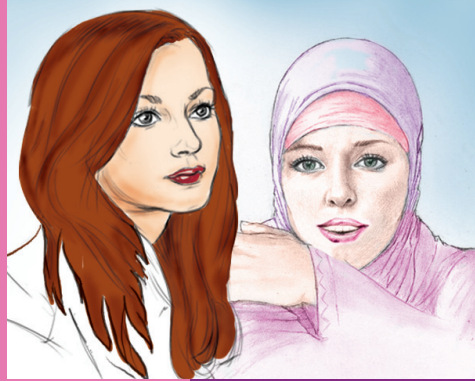


**Your Protection Starts  
with Breast Cancer Early  
Screening**



## Basics You Need to Know

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women. Breast cancer can develop in men at a much lower rate.
- Breast cancer risk increases with age; however, it can affect younger women in their 20s and 30s. Therefore it is recommended to start regular monthly self breast examinations in your early 20s to pick up any changes in shape, size or texture.
- Early detection of breast cancer through the screening and diagnostic methods contributes to decreased mortality from the disease. It increases the chance of a cure through advanced management and treatment.



## Risk Factors to be aware of

### Unavoidable Risks: things I cannot control

1. Gender: Women are at greater risk to develop breast cancer than men.
2. Age is the most influential risk factor.

3. Genetics: there are certain genes that, if present, increase the risk.
4. Family History: the risk is higher when a family member (mother, sister, daughter, and father) has had breast or ovarian cancer.
5. Personal History of breast cancer.
6. Having the period before the age of 12 or late onset of menopause; began menopause after the age of 55.

## Avoidable risks: things I can control

1. Hormone Replacement therapy after menopause
2. Not breastfeeding
3. Obesity and excess weight
4. Not being physically active
5. Smoking and being exposed to second-hand smoking
6. Consuming too much alcohol

**You can reduce your risk by maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise, a healthy diet and avoiding smoking and alcohol consumption.**



## What Symptoms and Signs Should I Look for?

Many women mistakenly think that a change in their breast is not concerning if there is no lump. While breast lumps are a common presentation of breast cancer there are other breast changes that mandate medical evaluation to rule out cancer.

***Alarming findings that should trigger a visit to your health care provider:***

1. Lump, hard knot, or thickening in the breast or armpits
2. Changes in size or shape of the breast
3. Changes in the skin - dimpling, puckering, rash or redness
4. Any area that feels different from the rest
5. Changes in the nipple - itchy, inversion
6. Nipple discharge of any color
7. New persistent breast pain that is not related to menstrual cycle



**You should be aware of any changes in your breast. If you notice anything different you should consult with your doctor. Always remember that early detection saves lives.**

## What are the National Screening Recommendations?

The standard complementary screening methods recommended by the Palestinian National Screening Guidelines are:

- Breast Self Exam
- Clinical Breast Exam
- Mammography

### Summary of Main Screening Recommendations for Women at Normal Risk

Breast Screening Method	20-34	35-40	40-50	50 and above
Self Breast Exam	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly
Clinical Breast Exam	Every 2 years	Every 2 years	Annually	Annually
Mammogram	-----	Base line (done once)	Every 2 years	Annually

**Women at high risk of developing breast cancer must consult with their doctor to establish screening recommendations particular to their case.**

## What is Breast Self Exam (BSE)?

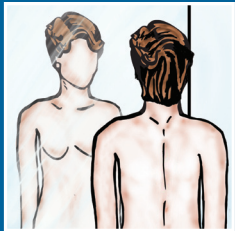
It is an exam that is performed every month after the menstrual cycle. It is recommended between days 7-12 of the cycle and NOT in the two weeks before or during the menstrual cycle when the breast tissue is usually more nodular and tender and may result in false findings and unnecessary anxiety.

If for any reason you have no menstrual cycle (e.g. postmenopausal women) a breast self exam can be performed on the same day every month.

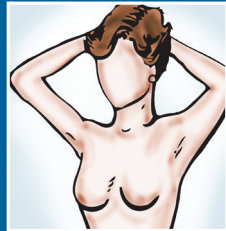
**A Breast Self Exam is easy to perform and consists of the following steps:**

### Step 1: Visual Inspection: standing in front of a mirror

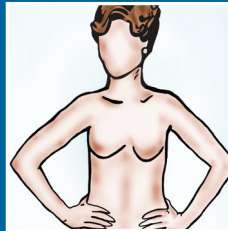
Look at the breast while standing in front of a mirror and notice any change in size, shape, and contour of the breast as well for any change in skin or nipples



With hands hanging on either side of the body



With hands over head



With both hands on your waist while stretching breast muscles. Then while bending forward

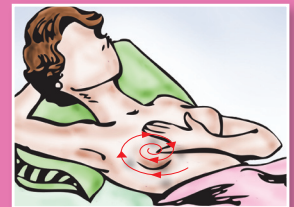
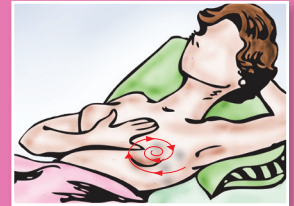
### Step 2: Examine while standing up or sitting down

- Use the pads of the three middle fingers to feel your breast. The breast should feel soft and smooth. To examine your breast, choose either circular, linear or wedge patterns; choose the one that works best for you.
- Repeat these steps for your other breast.
- You can also repeat these steps while in the shower (a shower can make this easier).



### Step 3: Examine while laying down

- Place a pillow under your left shoulder to feel the left breast using the three middle finger pads. Move around the breast using one of the patterns that works best for you (circular, linear or wedge). The pressure you apply is first light then medium then deep without lifting your hand from your breast.
- Repeat the same examination for the right breast using the finger pads of the left hand.
- Feel for any changes in the breast and below the armpit or collarbone and gently press on the nipple to check for any nipple discharge.



**A breast self exam is a way to become familiar with your own breast which allows you to notice any changes that may be a sign of breast cancer.**

### What is Clinical Breast Exam (CBE)?

It is an examination performed by experienced health care providers.

For asymptomatic women it is recommended to have CBE every two years between the age of 20-30 and annually for women older than 30.

- The health care provider will examine your breast to see if there are any changes in



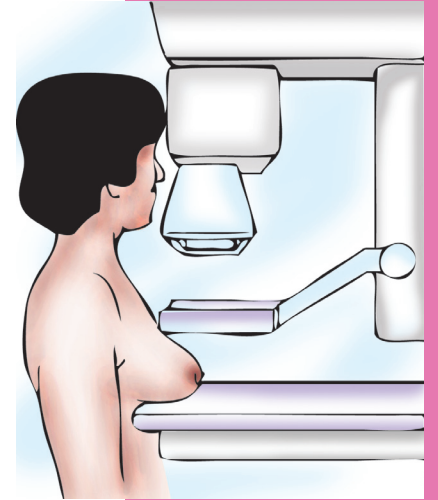
shape, skin or nipple while your arms relaxed at the sides, then arms above head and last while hands on the waist.

- The doctor or nurse will feel and examine the lymph nodes above and below the collarbone and under your arm area for any swelling or masses

**It is important that you ask your health care provider for a Clinical Breast Exam if not provided to you.**

### What is Screening Mammogram?

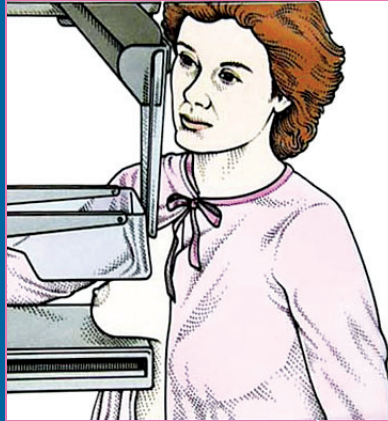
- It is an x-ray of the breast performed on asymptomatic women in the process of finding abnormalities that might be breast cancer.
- National screening recommendations are based on age for the asymptomatic women who are not identified in high risk groups: a baseline mammogram should be conducted at 35, and then once every two years between 40-50, and finally once every year after 50.





## What do you Need to Know Before Getting a Mammogram?

1. Do not apply perfume, deodorant, powder or lotion on the breasts or armpits before the mammogram as this may reduce the quality of the picture.
2. It is recommended that all clothing is removed above the waist. A gown is provided by the radiology technician.
3. The radiology technician will place one breast at a time between two plastic plates. The plates are used to provide firm pressure on the breast, which may be uncomfortable for some women but will last for less than a minute.
4. Limiting intake of Caffeine and having the mammogram done after the menstrual cycle (days 7-12) may decrease discomfort during mammography.
5. Make sure you point out any prior surgeries, procedures or accidents to the technician.



## The Power of Knowledge: Myths and Facts

**Myth:** If a woman bumps or bruises her breast, it can turn into breast cancer.

**Fact:** Bumps or bruises on a person's breast do not cause breast cancer.

**Myth:** Most cancerous lumps are painful.

**Fact:** Most breast cancer lumps do not hurt.

**Myth:** Sleeping in a bra — especially one with an under wire — can cause breast cancer.

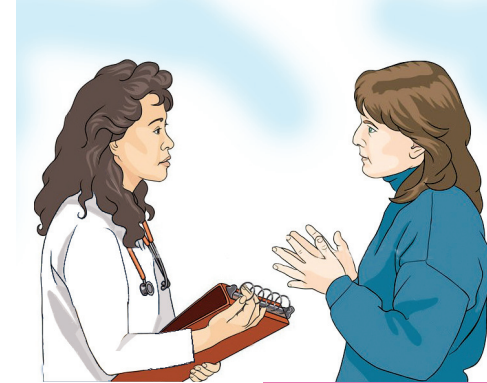
**Fact:** There is no scientific proof to show that sleeping in a bra can cause breast cancer.

**Myth:** Small-breasted women cannot get breast cancer.

**Fact:** Breast size and shape have nothing to do at all with a woman's risk of breast cancer.

**Myth:** It is unsafe to use antiperspirants or deodorants.

**Fact:** There is no scientific proof that this is true.



## What if I feel a mass or notice a change in my breast?

Do not panic. Most of the breast symptoms are due to benign disease. However, it is important to get it checked by your doctor immediately to make sure it is not a sign of breast cancer. Your doctor will confirm if there is any symptom or sign that requires further diagnosis and evaluation.

Start with yourself and get screening today and then spread the knowledge to your circle of family, friends and colleagues.

Again, contact your health care provider if you notice any change in your breast and make sure to follow the Palestinian breast cancer screening guidelines.

## Special thanks to the technical review of the booklet by:

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