

# HILL VIEW HOSPITAL & RESEARCH CENTER

## DEPARTMENT OF RADIOLOGY (SPECIAL CELL)

### **Why should one do BSE?**

There is a 1 in 10 chance that a woman will have breast cancer during her lifetime. Over 1,000,000 women find lumps in their breasts every year some of which are cancerous but most are benign. A simple Breast Self-Examination (BSE) can be the key to finding any abnormality early.

### **Who should do BSE?**

It is good to be in the habit of breast self-examination (BSE) on a regular basis since early detection leads to early investigation and treatment. Women of all ages should perform self-examination since breast problems can occur at any age. The best time of the month to perform self-examination is after menstruation, when the breast tissue is softer and lumps are more likely to be felt. Immediately prior to menstruation the breast becomes naturally lumpy and often tender - features that can mask a problem. For women who are post-menstrual, with irregular periods or who have had hysterectomy, a suitable time should be chosen - for example the 1st day of the month. Examination more frequently than this, is probably not necessary and may lead to increased anxiety. A woman who regularly examines her breasts will get a very clear idea of her normal breast texture and consistency, and will help her to notice if something is different. Individual hospitals and specialists may advise slightly different methods, but the principles of BSE are the same.

### **How to do BSE?**

There are two basic steps to conducting a BSE:

1. Visual Examination
2. Tactile Examination

### **Visual Examination**

During the first part of the BSE, the visual examination, you look for changes in each breast. What is important in visual BSE is not the normal difference between your two breasts, but any change in one breast without a similar change in the other. The changes you have to look for include:

Shape

Size

Contour or symmetry (is there a difference in the level between your nipples? Do both breasts look symmetrical?)

Skin discoloration or dimpling

Bumps/lumps – NOTE: normal lumpiness, like in the week before and of your menstrual cycle, will appear as very small and separate lumps like the texture of an orange.

Sores or scaly skin

Discharge or puckering of the nipple

Dimple

Ulceration

Stand in front of a mirror and look for the above changes in your breasts (from both a frontal and profile view) in 3 different positions:

1. With your arms raised



2. With your arms down at your sides



3. Bending forward

with your hands on your hips and shoulders turned in  
with your arms relaxed hanging in front of you

### **Tactile Examination**

This is the part of the examination when you need to feel your breasts for any changes. It is important to check the surrounding areas because breast cancer may be found in the lymph node tissue around the breast and underarm. Begin by lying in bed. Place a small pillow or folded towel under your left shoulder and your left hand behind your head. Your shoulder should be raised high enough for your left breast to be center on top of your chest, falling neither to the center nor toward the armpit; this arrangement distributes the breast tissue as evenly as possible across the chest wall. If a breast is not properly flattened against the chest, it is difficult to feel a lump – particularly in the outer upper quadrant, where tissue is thickest (and where most cancers occur). Feel your breasts and surrounding areas, which include:

- the breast
- between the breast and underarm
- the underarm
- the area above the breast up to the collarbone and across to your shoulder

Use the pads (where your fingerprints are) of your three middle fingers on your right hand pressed together flat to check your left breast, and do the opposite for the right breast. You should press on your breast with varying degrees of pressure:

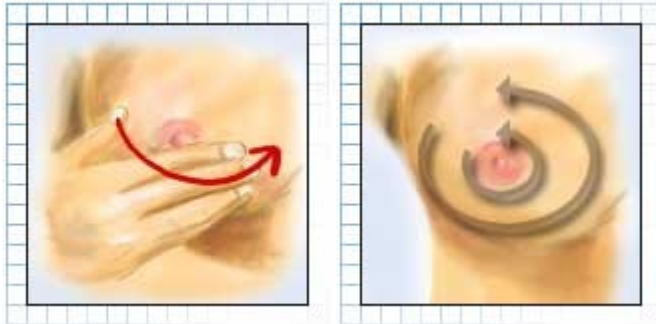
- light (move the skin without moving the tissue underneath)
- medium (midway into the tissue)
- hard (down to the ribs "on the verge of pain")

When using any of the 3 patterns, you should always be using a circular rubbing motion without lifting your fingers.

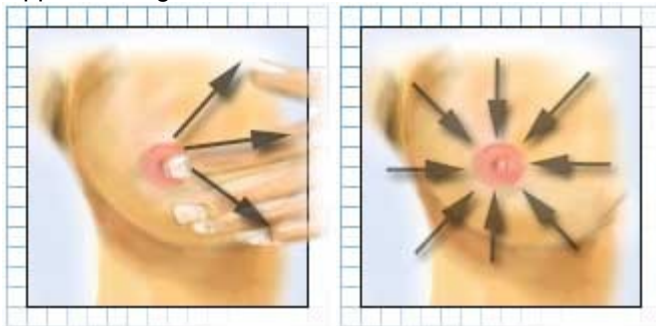


### Patterns of breast examination

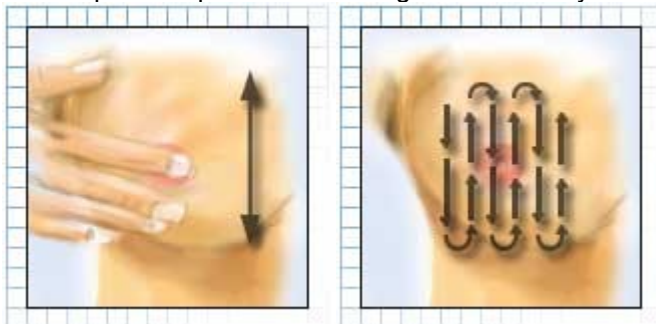
**Spiral:** Begin with a large circle around the perimeter of your breast and make smaller and smaller circles as you work your way toward the nipple.



**Wedges:** Pretend your breast is divided into sections like triangular pieces of a cake, begin in the nipple area and feel your breast in a small circular motion within one section, then move on to the next wedge starting in the nipple area again.



**Vertical or linear:** Pretend your breast is divided into vertical stripes. Begin on the underarm area on one side and feel your breast in a small circular motion up and down in a zig zag pattern till the whole breast is covered. Then repeat the process for the right breast with your left hand.



**What to feel for?**

Carefully notice the "feel" of your normal breast structure, so that you can note at once any changes from what is usual for you. Many women have a normal thickening or ridge of firm tissue under the lower curve of the breast, at its attachment to the chest wall; also the large milk ducts can be felt as a ring of bumps at the outer edge of the areola. In very slender women, the bony prominences of the chest wall may be mistaken for chest tumours, as may enlarged milk glands, fat tumours, lymph nodes, or benign cysts. All such thickenings should be felt carefully during each monthly BSE, in order to distinguish normal conditions from potentially dangerous changes. Any lump or other change found in one breast only (especially in the upper outer quadrant) is more likely to be serious. If in doubt about ANY development, consult your doctor.

(COUTESY: DOCTOR NDTV)