

What Is Cancer?

Cancer is a disease of the body's cells. Normal cells of the body grow and repair at an orderly rate. When cell division is not orderly, abnormal growth takes place and forms a tumor. Tumors can be benign or malignant. Benign tumors do not spread to other parts of the body and are unlikely to return once they are removed from the body. Malignant tumors are considered cancerous. Untreated malignant tumors invade neighboring tissues and organs and can spread to other parts of the body forming more malignant tumors. Even after removing the malignant tumor, the disease can recur, because it spreads to other parts of the body.

What Are The Risk Factors For Breast Cancer?

There is much about breast cancer that is still not understood. In fact, 70% of breast cancer patients have none of the classical risk factors. This fact is important to consider for two reasons. First, women thinking that they have no risk factors may create a false sense of security for themselves. Second, women having risk factors may suffer from needless excessive worry. All women are at risk for breast cancer; although the level of risk varies. Risk factors for breast cancer may include:

- high fat diet
- smoking
- obesity
- late age of first birth or choosing not to have children
- family history
- alcohol
- late menopause (after age 55)
- early onset of menstruation (before age 12)

The Advantages of Breast Self-Exams

Breast cancer, like other types of cancer, is best treated when it is detected early. Performing breast self exam (BSE) is one of the best means of detecting an abnormal lump. ***It is important to note that 80% of lumps that are found in breast tissue are not cancerous.*** Besides having the potential to detect a lump early, BSE also affords women and men the opportunity to increase self-awareness of their bodies, in particular the breasts.

What Exactly Are You Looking For When You Are Doing BSE?

It is hard to know what is "right" or "wrong" for your body, unless you have a basic idea of what is normal for you. BSE is a great way to establish a healthy level of self awareness about your breast. Breast tissue is made up of glands and other tissue that can feel lumpy to the touch. The amount of lumpiness varies for each person.

You are looking for one or two lumps that:

- stand out
- are 1/2 inch in size
- are persistent and unchanging
- represent any difference from normal breast tissue

It is important to know that the consistency of breast tissue changes throughout the life cycle and the monthly menstrual cycle.

For Women: When Should I Do BSE?

Once a month, the week after your period is considered the best time. This point in the menstrual cycle tends to be when the breasts are the least lumpy and less tender. The key is to check your breasts at a consistent time each month. Selecting a certain point in the cycle can also help you remember to do it.

How Do You Do BSE?

There are two parts of breast exam: a visual and manual exam of the breast tissue.

VISUAL EXAM:

Look at your breasts in a mirror. You are looking for obvious changes such as:

- dimpling of your skin
- a nipple that is suddenly inverted
- any discoloration of the breast that does not go away
- a change in size or shape of the breast
- discharge from the nipple

The easiest way to see any of the changes listed above is to put your arms up over your head and turn side to side. After putting your arms over your head, place your hands on your hips and contract your pectoral muscles (chest muscles), looking for any of the signs listed above.

MANUAL EXAM

The second part of BSE is palpating or feeling your breasts. Some people prefer to complete this part of the exam in the shower, while others prefer to do it lying down. Whichever you prefer, the steps of the exam are the same. Both breasts must be examined. If you examine your left breast first, place your left hand behind your head and examine the left breast with your right hand. Use the padded part of your fingers to firmly touch the breast tissue. Do not grab the skin; just press on it. Begin exploring the breast tissue using a pattern that assures that you'll feel all the tissue. There are several patterns to choose from when doing the BSE. These patterns are illustrated on the side panel of this pamphlet.

DOING THE BREAST SELF-EXAM



Feel your breasts for lumps. (Use circles or rows.)
(See Patterns of BSE below)



Also check under your arms, up to your collar bone, and below your breasts.



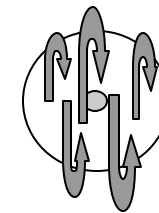
Gently squeeze your nipples.



With your arms raised over your head, look for any changes (puckering, size/shape, redness, discharge) in your breasts. Then, put your hands on your hips and look again.



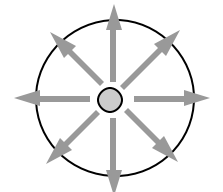
PATTERNS FOR BSE



Up & Down Motion



Spiral Pattern



Outward Motion

It is important to use the same palpation technique up by the collar bone, down the sternum and under your armpit. When you have finished with one breast, reverse the position of your arms and do the other. If you do BSE lying down, it is best to place a pillow or towel underneath the shoulder of the breast that is to be examined. **Remember, you are looking for any change. The point of BSE is to make you more comfortable with your breasts, not less.**

What About Mammography?

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast tissue. Mammography can detect lumps as small as half a centimeter. Most women do not have their first mammogram until age 35 to 40 (depending on the health care provider's recommendation). Generally, mammography is not recommended for women younger than age 35. The breast tissue of younger women is more dense rendering mammography less effective in detecting a lump. Ultrasound is also a new technology that is available for lump detection.

You should know that the ECU Student Health Service provides education concerning breast health, breast exams, and consults with students about any breast health concern.

Sources:
 National Cancer Institute (1997).
 American Cancer Society (1998).
 Love, S.M. (1991). *Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
 Foley, D. & Nechas, E. (1993). *Women's Encyclopedia of Health & Emotional Healing*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press.

Remember:
 80% of symptoms
 are not cancerous.

What Should You Do If You Have A Symptom?

1. See your health care provider.
2. If you are over age 35, the health care provider may recommend a mammogram to investigate the symptom further.
3. Depending on the circumstances of the case, you may be referred to a breast specialist or surgeon. **Do not be alarmed!** Seeing a surgeon does not automatically mean a malignancy or an operation.
4. The surgeon or specialist may recommend a biopsy. There are different types of biopsies, from small needle incisions to removal of the entire lump. Be sure to ask about which type of biopsy is to be performed.
5. Recommendations will be made based on the results of the biopsy.

To Contact Us

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 Appointments.....(252) 328-6841
 Immunizations.....(252) 328-6841
 Wellness Education.....(252) 328-6794
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Hours of Operation

Fall and Spring

8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Monday - Thursday
 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Wednesday
 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Saturday & Sunday, Urgent Care

Fall and Spring Pharmacy Hours

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday
 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday

Summer

(Mid May - Mid August)
 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Thursday
 7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Friday

For after hours emergencies, dial 911.

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE
 EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
 GREENVILLE, NC 27858

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BREAST CANCER



Student Health Service

