

### *Take Control to Lower Your Risk*

Some risk factors for breast cancer are beyond your control. But a number of significant risk factors CAN be "undone" to reduce your risk of breast cancer:

- ✂ With a little or a lot of help, you should try to stop smoking—for good!
- ✂ Try to exercise on a regular basis, aiming for three to four hours a week.
- ✂ Anything you can do to relieve your stress and to enhance your comfort, satisfaction, and joy will have a major effect on your quality of life.
- ✂ So-called "mindful measures" (such as meditation, yoga, visualization exercises, and prayer) are valuable additions to your daily or weekly routine.

Making some or all of these lifestyle changes will improve your overall health and possibly also reduce your risk of breast cancer.

You can minimize or eliminate sources of extra estrogen from your diet or environment with the following steps:

- ✂ Stop drinking alcohol (cutting down on alcohol increases your liver's ability to regulate blood estrogen levels).
- ✂ Restrict red meat and other sources of animal fat (this includes dairy fat in cheese, milk, and ice cream), as they may contain stored hormones or pesticides.
- ✂ Try to stick to a relatively vegetarian diet.
- ✂ Shed any extra pounds, and try hard to keep those pounds off.
- ✂ If you have already had breast cancer, avoid taking estrogen-like products such as menopausal hormone therapy and DHEA.
- ✂ If circumstances allow, consider having children sooner rather than later in life.

### *Strengthen Your Defenses*

#### **With Medicine**

If you are at a high risk for breast cancer (as determined by your physician), you may want to consider using preventive

medication. Medicine can reduce the extent to which estrogen stimulates the growth of breast cells. See your doctor for more information.

#### **With surgery**

Some women who have an extremely high risk of breast cancer want to do everything possible to reduce that risk, even if it means very aggressive action. In this situation, they may consider surgery to remove the breasts before cancer has a chance to occur. This procedure, called prophylactic removal of the breasts, can reduce the risk of breast cancer by about 90% in women who have either a strong family history of the disease or a proven breast cancer gene abnormality. Women with an inherited breast cancer gene abnormality may consider prophylactic ovary removal to help reduce the risk of both breast and ovarian cancer. These drastic procedures do not eliminate the risk of breast cancer entirely, and require a very individual decision—there is no "right" or "wrong" answer.

#### **With early detection**

Until all breast cancers can be prevented, every woman needs to practice early detection measures. The goal is to find breast cancer as early as possible, when it's most curable. These are current recommended guidelines for the early detection of breast cancer:

- ✂ Do a monthly breast self-examination at home.
- ✂ Get a yearly breast examination by a physician (you may need these exams more often, depending on your situation and individual level of breast cancer risk).
- ✂ Get a mammogram every year beginning at age 40.
- ✂ Stay tuned to new advances

A tremendous amount of promising research is under way to determine the cause of breast cancer and to establish effective means to prevent it. There ARE real reasons to feel optimistic and hopeful.

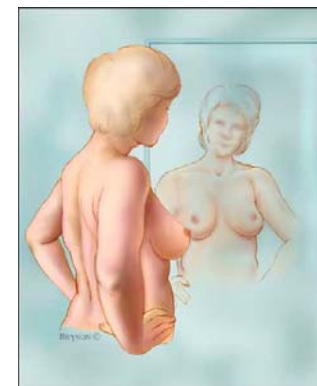
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*Accuracy of the content is current to the date of printing.*

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# BREAST SELF EXAM



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## *What is a Breast Self-Exam?*

A Breast Self Exam is a monthly exam a woman can do herself to check for breast cancer. When you do a breast self-exam you check for lumps, thickening, dimples in the breast, or discharge from the nipples.

Cancer of the breast is the most common type of breast cancer in American women. In Antigua & Barbuda, Breast cancer causes approximately 18% of cancer related deaths and is the leading cause of all cancer related deaths among women. In most cases, the cancer is discovered by women doing self-exams. When Breast cancer is found early and treated right away, the chances of cure are better. Every woman should do regular breast self-exams.

## *What is the best time to examine my breasts?*

Exam your breasts once a month, a few days after your period, when your breasts are usually the least tender and least swollen.

If you have already been through the menopause, whether naturally or surgically (after the doctor removes the ovaries), then check your breasts on the first of every month or whenever you can best remember to do it monthly.

## *How do I do a Breast Self-Exam?*

A Breast Self Exam consists of five basic steps.

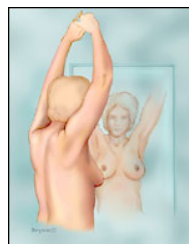
**Step 1:** Begin by looking at your breasts in the mirror with your shoulders straight and your arms on your hips.

Here's what you should look for:

- ✂ breasts that are their usual size, shape, and color.
- ✂ breasts that are evenly shaped without visible distortion or swelling.

If you see any of the following changes, bring them to your doctor's attention:

- ✂ dimpling, puckering, or bulging of the skin.
- ✂ a nipple that has changed position or an inverted nipple (pushed inward instead of sticking out).
- ✂ redness, soreness, rash, or swelling.



**Step 2:** Now raise your arms and look for the same changes

**Step 3:** While you're at the mirror, gently squeeze each nipple between your finger and thumb and check for nipple discharge (this could be a milky or yellow fluid or blood).

**Step 4:** Next, feel your breasts while lying down, using your right hand to feel your left breast and then your left hand to feel your right breast. Use a firm, smooth touch with the first few fingers of your hand, keeping the fingers flat and together.

Cover the entire breast from top to bottom, side to side—from your collarbone to the top of your abdomen, and from your armpit to your cleavage.



Follow a pattern to be sure that you cover the whole breast. You can begin at the nipple, moving in larger and larger circles until you reach the outer edge of the breast. You can also move your fingers up and down vertically, in rows, as if you were mowing a lawn. Be sure to feel all the breast tissue: just beneath your skin with a soft touch and down deeper with a firmer touch. Begin examining each area with a very soft touch, and then increase pressure so that you can feel the deeper tissue, down to your ribcage.

**Step 5:** Finally, feel your breasts while you are standing or sitting. Many women find that the easiest way to feel their breasts is when their skin is wet and slippery, so they like to do this step in the shower. Cover your entire breast, using the same hand movements described in Step 4.



## *When should I call the Doctor?*

If you find a lump, dimple, or discharge during your breast self-exam, see your doctor as soon as possible. Don't be frightened. Most lumps are not cancerous, but only your doctor can make the diagnosis.

*“When Breast Cancer is found early and treated right away, the chances of cure are better.”*