



# Taking good care

Looking after your body  
by being breast aware



Whatever your age, size or shape it's important to take care of your breasts

Breast cancer is now the most common cancer in the UK, so it's more important than ever to take care of your breasts by being breast aware.

Many cases of breast cancer are identified because of people being breast aware – earlier detection of breast cancer can mean simpler and more effective treatment.

Being breast aware is an important part of caring for your body. It means getting to know how your breasts look and feel normally so you can feel confident about noticing any changes.

Even though it's uncommon, men can also get breast cancer so it's important for men to be breast aware too – the information in this leaflet is relevant to everyone.

## How do I check my breasts?

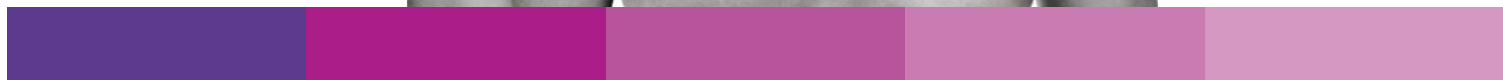
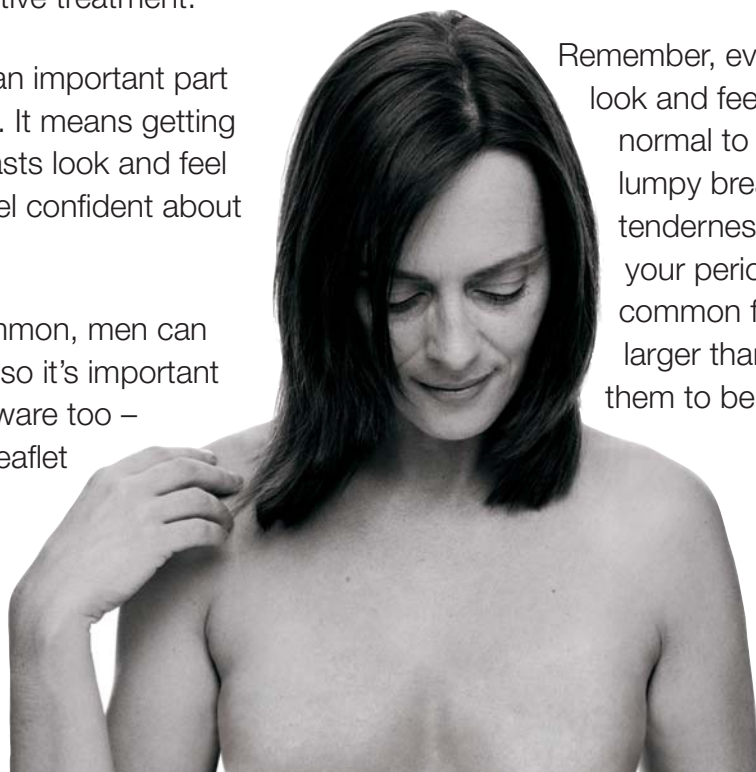
There is no right or wrong way to check your breasts. Try to get into the habit of looking at and feeling your breasts regularly. You could do this in the bath or shower, when using body lotion, or when getting dressed. You decide what is comfortable and convenient for you. Remember to check all parts of your breast, your armpits and up to your collarbone.

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Remember, everyone's breasts look and feel different. It's normal to regularly have lumpy breasts, and to have tenderness or pain around your period. It's also common for one breast to be larger than the other or for them to be different shapes.



## What changes should I look and feel for?

When checking your breasts, try to be aware of any changes that are different for you. This could be:

- a change in size or shape
- a lump or thickening that feels different from normal
- a puckering or dimpling of the skin like the texture of orange peel
- if your nipple becomes inverted (pulled-in) or changes its position or shape
- if your nipple starts to have discharge or a rash around it
- a swelling in your armpit
- constant pain in your armpit or your breast.

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Report any changes to your doctor without delay – most changes will not be breast cancer

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## When should I see the doctor?

It's important to see your doctor as soon as you can if you find a change. Most breast changes are not cancer so try not to worry. But you do need to find out what is causing the change. You can ask to see a female doctor or for the nurse to be present if you prefer; you can also take someone you trust with you.

## When will I get invited for breast screening?

Women are invited for a mammogram (breast x-ray) from the age of 50 to 70 as most breast cancers occur from that age. (This age range is likely to be increased to 47 to 73 in the future.) You have to be registered with a doctor to be invited. Younger women are not invited as routine screening is not seen to benefit this age group unless they have a significant family history.

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It's important to attend all your screening appointments

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If you are over 70 you can ask your doctor to be screened as you are still at risk. Staying breast aware between screenings is vital as most changes are picked up by people themselves.

## Does breast cancer run in families?

Breast cancer is a common disease, with 1 in 9 women in the UK developing it during their lifetime. So it is not unusual to have one or two people in the extended family who have had breast cancer. However, a small number of cases (5–10%) do run in the family and may be caused by a faulty gene.

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Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your family history of breast cancer

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## Can I reduce my risk of getting breast cancer?

We do not know exactly what causes breast cancer but we do know that being female and getting older does increase risk. You may help to reduce your risk – and look after your general health – by:

- eating a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables
- doing regular exercise
- limiting the amount of alcohol you drink.

### The breast awareness 5-point code

- 1** Know what is normal for you
- 2** Know what changes to look and feel for
- 3** Look and feel
- 4** Report any changes to your GP without delay
- 5** Attend routine breast screening if you are aged 50 or over





## About us

Breast Cancer Care is here for anyone affected by breast cancer. We bring people together, provide information and support, and campaign for improved standards of care. We use our understanding of people's experience of breast cancer and our clinical expertise in everything we do.

We promote the importance of early detection of breast cancer and provide accurate answers to questions about breast health. We believe that up-to-date information, based on clinical evidence, builds confidence and helps people take control of their health. Our training, workshops and resources explain how to be breast aware and what changes to look and feel for.

## Get in touch

Visit [www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk) or call our free helpline on **0808 800 6000** (for Typetalk prefix **18001**). Interpreters are available in any language.

Calls may be monitored for training purposes. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Breast Cancer Care.

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