



BREAST  
SELF-EXAM

# Breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women. Every 8th to 12th woman will encounter the disease in her life. Almost 7,000 women are diagnosed every year in the Czech Republic alone. Currently there are nearly 70,000 patients living and there is an increase in the number of young women currently being affected. Unfortunately, the number of patients with breast cancer is still rising, however, those women whose tumors are found in time have a better chance of recovery due to current treatments available.

## Risk Factors

The root cause of the breast cancer is still unknown. The risk factors include older age, early age at first menstruation, having children late or not at all, late menopause, alcohol intake, poor diet, obesity, stress and family history (gene mutation). Breastfeeding reduces the risk of breast cancer. With regards to hormonal contraceptives, the results are not yet clear.

## Prevention

Breast cancer can be prevented by reducing the risk factors described above. In general, the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, moderate exercise and stress avoidance are guide for primary prevention of all oncological diseases.

## Importance of breast self-exam

Self-exam plays an important role in so-called secondary breast cancer prevention. Physical examination cannot replace mammographic or ultrasound examination, but should become a part of every woman's life. Self-exam should also be performed by women with breast implants, pregnant and nursing.

## When to start self-exam?

With a regular self-exam all women should start ideally from reaching the adult age.

## How often do you perform self-exam?

Examine your breasts regularly every month. The best time for self-examination is a time just after your period, when the breasts are not as sensitive, are softer and without any tension. Or you can choose an easy-to-remember day, such as the first day of the month or the day you retired.

## How hard it is to learn self-exam?

If you are a beginner, check your breasts every day so that you familiarize yourself with how your breasts normally look and feel. Self-examination requires a certain technique, but it is not difficult to learn. At the beginning your breasts may seem full of lumps and bumps. Do not panic, and continue with the self-examination as instructed. The milk glands have a certain structure as well as the fatty tissue. It is important to learn to get to know your breasts and to be able to distinguish any changes.

## Breast self-examination

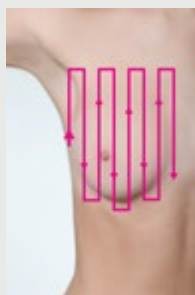
Use fingertips of your three middle fingers. Touch bit by bit and slowly make small circular movements. The rings of your movements should be overlapped so you don't miss a bit.



Gentle alternate between medium and stronger pressure so that you can thoroughly examine all layers of the breast tissue.

Choose the self-examination scheme that suits you the best and follow this routine every month.

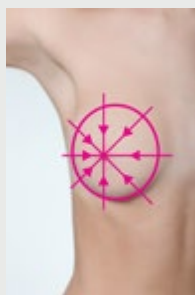
- vertical



- circular



- wedge



Do the self-test standing in front of the mirror. Then repeat the procedure lying down, when the breasts are flattened and the breast tissue has changed.

## What to look for?

Take care noticing visible changes and compare changes in breast size, shape and symmetry.

Check for any unusual signs:

- dimpling of the skin, thickened skin that resembles orange peeling around the areola or the nipple
- dent, scalp, breast or nipple scratching
- persistent itching or an eczema on the breast or nipples
- unusual secretion from the nipple (discharge or bleeding)
- color changes or redness
- enlarged lymph nodes under the armpit and under the collarbone
- swelling of the arm, pain or increased breast temperature

## Self-exam procedure

### Examination by a look

Stand in front of the mirror and check the look of your breasts in the mirror:

- with your hands down alongside of the body
- standing sideways
- with your arms raised above your head
- with your hands on your hips - lean forward a little



## Examination by touch

Lift one hand behind your head. With the other hand, gradually examine your whole breast.



## Examination of bigger size breasts

Self-exam can be helped by supporting the breast with the other hand.



## Examination of the nipple

Press the nipple gently to reveal any discharge.



## Under the armpit exam

Examine the lymph nodes in your armpits.



## Examine the area around the collarbone

Examine the area around your collarbones and above the breast bone in between your breasts.



# What to do if you have doubts and if you notice a change?

If you are in any doubt, contact your doctor - gynecologist, mammologist, general practitioner or the screening center. You can also contact **Mamma HELP**, we will be happy to hear from you and advise you on how to proceed. All important contacts can be found at [www.mammahelp.cz](http://www.mammahelp.cz).

Any change found does not mean that you are ill, but you need to be certain. It is recommended to visit a doctor as soon as possible and not to panic. The doctor will examine the finding and send you to have a mammograph or to go for an ultrasound check to make the discovery clear.

Don't get send away!

## Contacts

- **Mamma HELP Center Prague**  
phone: 272 732 691, 739 632 884, [paha@mammahelp.cz](mailto:paha@mammahelp.cz)
- **Mamma HELP Center Brno**  
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**Mamma HELP, z.s.**

Organization for patients with breast cancer

[www.mammahelp.cz](http://www.mammahelp.cz)