



Appendix 5: Steps for breast self-examination

Examine breasts monthly, after a menstrual period.

For all steps of breast self-examination, the client should be advised that the breast tissue on each side extends from the collarbone down to the bra-strap line below the breasts, and from the central breastbone to the right and left into the armpits (axillae).

Step 1: Visually inspect breasts in a mirror

- Start with arms down by the sides, then straight up in the air and finally with hands pressed firmly on hips. Take note of any:
- lump or thickening in the breasts, whatever their size
- change in the appearance or shape of the breasts
- alteration in the position or level of the nipples
- dimpling of the skin surface
- retracted nipples
- discharge or bleeding from the nipples
- puckering of the skin surface like that of an orange (*peau d'orange*)

Step 2: Examine breasts while lying down

Place a pillow under the left shoulder and the left arm under the head. Use the right hand to feel the left breast with the pads of the middle three fingers, keeping the hand flat. Repeat vice versa to examine the right breast with the left hand. The breast should be palpated lightly but firmly in a systematic way, e.g. in concentric circles or quadrants.

Step 3: Examine breasts while standing up

Follow a systematic approach to palpation as in Step 2, but standing up, e.g. in the shower.