

Breast Self-Examination (BSE)

Once each month, check your treated breast or mastectomy site. Also check the opposite breast and underarms using the instructions below.

Why do a BSE

- If the cancer returns, it may be at the scar site in the breast or underarm area.
- It is important that you become familiar with the appearance, texture and feel of your scar and the surrounding chest area.
- You may notice changes in your breast and chest areas before your doctor does. Be sure to tell your doctor about any changes.

When to Do Your Monthly BSE

- If you are menstruating regularly, do your breast self-exam 2 to 5 days after the last day of your period (when normal premenstrual swelling is gone).
- If you are no longer menstruating regularly, choose a specific day of the month (e.g., the 5th) to do your BSE.
- If you have had breast reconstruction or augmentation, continue to examine the reconstructed or augmented area using the same BSE procedure you used before your surgery. Pay close attention to the outer edge of the new tissue and skin as you examine yourself.

How to Examine Your Breast, Chest Wall and Underarm

Look

Stand in front of a mirror in a room with plenty of light. Look at your breast or mastectomy site and underarm in the mirror.

Tell your doctor **immediately** if you notice any of the changes listed below:

- A persistent rash or irritation in the area of your scar (incision)
- Swelling
- Lumps
- A change in the size or shape of the breast
- Thickening of the skin
- Redness
- Change in skin color

Touch

Palpation (the medical term for touching) may be done more accurately and easily in the shower with soap on your hands or out of the shower using body lotion. Pay close attention to the axillary or armpit area. Lumps may feel larger and softer than those in the breast.

Check the surgical scar. With two fingers together, gently press the area using small circular motions.

Check the chest wall. With three or four fingers together, use a sweeping motion to check the chest wall. Next, feel the base of your neck, above and below your collarbones. Also feel your underarms by moving your fingers across those areas.

Tell your doctor **immediately** if you feel any of the changes listed below:

- New or unusual swelling
- New lumps
- Thickening of the skin
- A rash or bumps
- Soreness

Reminder

It is very important that you keep all your appointments and tell your health care provider if you notice any changes.