Breast self-examination (BSE), performed at the same time each month, takes little time, costs nothing and can help you be aware of how your breasts normally look and feel.

Contact your health care professional if you discover any changes. Breast self-exams are not a substitute for regular breast exams by a health care professional or for screening mammograms.

1. **Stand in front of a mirror.** Examine your breasts with hands at sides, then clasped overhead. Look for changes in size or shape, or nipple changes. Squeeze both nipples between thumb and forefinger to check for discharge. Then press hands on hips and push elbows forward to tighten chest muscles. Look for dimpling, puckering, redness, scaliness or changes in shape, size, texture or skin color.

2. **In the shower.** BSE is easier when your skin is wet and soapy. In the shower, raise your right arm above your head. Think about the BSE grid as you cover your entire breast area, using the “touch technique” described above. Repeat for left side.

3. **Lying down.** Lying down helps to flatten the breast, making it easier to examine the breast tissue by pressing it firmly against the chest wall. Place a pillow under right shoulder. Begin at the armpit and make a series of three small circles. Use light, medium and deep pressure. Think about the BSE grid pattern and begin again. Cover your entire breast area. Repeat for left side.

Visit www.healthywomen.org for more information.