

## About Marie Stopes International

Marie Stopes International is a specialist reproductive healthcare organisation and a registered charity, working in both the UK and overseas.

Our nine main UK centres help over 100,000 women and men each year with sexual and reproductive healthcare, contraception and health screening... but the good work does not stop here.

Any financial surplus generated in the UK helps us provide reproductive healthcare services to women and their families in some of the poorest communities in the world.

The organisation campaigns for better awareness of sexual health issues and open access to services for everyone. Our aim is to provide a high quality service, tailored to individual need. Whichever service you require, we offer convenient appointments and experienced teams who are supportive and professional.

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### Registered charity no.

265543

### Company no.

1102208



HS2/rev0/SP/6.08

# caring for your breasts

## help, information & advice



**MARIE STOPES  
INTERNATIONAL**

# caring for your breasts

## Why breast-awareness is important

Every year nearly 40,000 women in the UK are diagnosed with breast cancer which affects one in ten women. Breast cancer can however, be treated successfully, particularly if found early. That is why it is so important to be breast aware and know what is normal for you: the vast majority of breast cancers are found by women themselves.

There is no such thing as a normal breast, what is normal for one woman may not be normal for another. Do not worry about knowing what to look for when you start – the more familiar you become with how your breasts look and feel, the easier it will be to spot any changes.

## Do all women need to be breast aware?

It is important for all women to keep an eye on any changes in their breasts from their mid twenties onwards as there is a small risk of breast cancer at any age, although the risk is greater for women over 50. Women are also more at risk if a close relative like a mother or sister has had breast cancer. Personal or family history of ovarian cancer can also be linked to a risk of breast cancer in some women.

Other non-cancerous lumps often affect younger women. Whatever your age, it is good to be breast aware, so that any irregular changes are recognised easily.

## When should I be breast aware?

A lot of women find that their breasts feel lumpy and tender in the days leading up to their period. This is normal so please do not worry. It is more important to be aware of how your breasts look and feel, rather than follow a date specific examination routine or technique.

A good idea to help you get used to how your breasts feel is to informally check them while you are washing in the shower.

## What should I look for?

It is important to be aware of the following:

- Your breasts changing shape or size
- Unusual pain in just one place
- Dimpling on the skin, a bit like an 'orange peel' effect
- Changes in your nipples, including a rash, ulcers or nipple turning inwards
- Bleeding or discharge from your nipple; this is rare but should always be checked out

## Please see below for a quick guide to being breast aware which may help you get started.

Undress from the waist up and stand in front of a mirror.

Your breasts look different when your arms are in different positions, so get to know what they look like.

- With your arms by your sides (1)

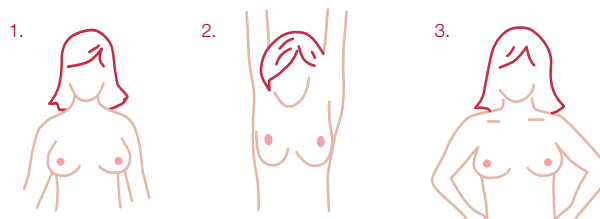
Look at your breasts as you turn from side to side

- Stretching upwards (2)

Keep looking for anything unusual, not forgetting your nipples

- With your hands on your hips (3)

Press your hands on your hips until you feel your chest muscles tighten. Look particularly for any skin changes like a dimple or 'orange peel' effect.



## What do I do if I am worried?

If you think you have a lump or recognise any other changes in your breast, you should see your GP as soon as possible. They can arrange for you to have a further screening.

Do not panic; 9 out of 10 breast lumps are not cancer at all. More often they turn out to be cysts (small sacs of fluid) or fibrous tissue which can either be treated or left alone.

## Mammography

Women over 50 years are advised to have routine mammography. This is an x-ray of the breasts to check for any irregularities. If you would like more information about mammography services in your area, contact your GP or Marie Stopes International can arrange a private referral.

## Well Woman screening

Marie Stopes International provides Well Woman screening which gives you the opportunity of a regular comprehensive female health check. This includes a cervical smear test, breast awareness teaching, contraceptive advice, and cholesterol and blood pressure checks. Marie Stopes International centres providing this service are in London, Leeds and Bristol.

**For more information about Well Woman screening call us on 0845 300 0460 or visit [www.mariestopes.org.uk](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk)**