

Breast Cancer: The importance of Self Breast Examination

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer affecting women. In Malaysia, the overall lifetime risk of developing Breast cancer is 1 in 27, with 1 in 22 for Chinese, 1 in 23 for Indians and 1 in 30 for Malays.

Breast cancer is curable if detected early and treated appropriately. One must be mindful of how our breast feels. What is normal for one person, may not be normal for someone else. Only YOU know what is normal for You. Hence Self Breast Examination (SBE) is particularly important.

It is quite easy to do and can be done by any woman independently. Self Breast Examination is best done 10 days after one's period or if you are post menopause, then pick any day of the month as a routine.

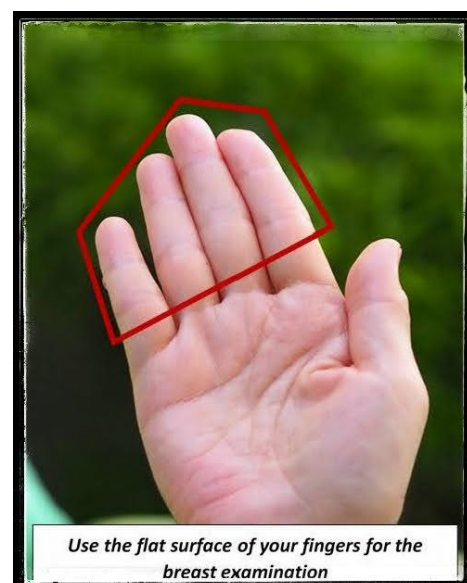
Steps to check your breast

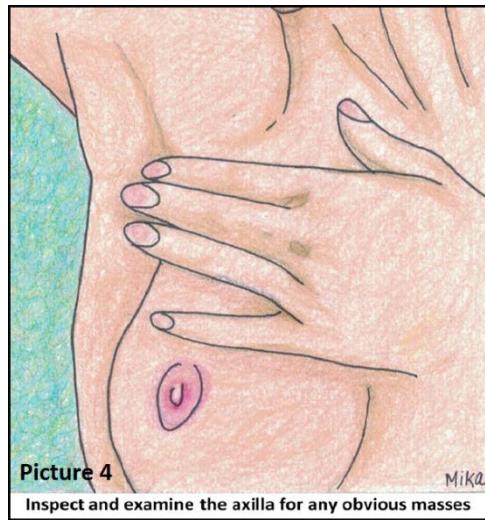
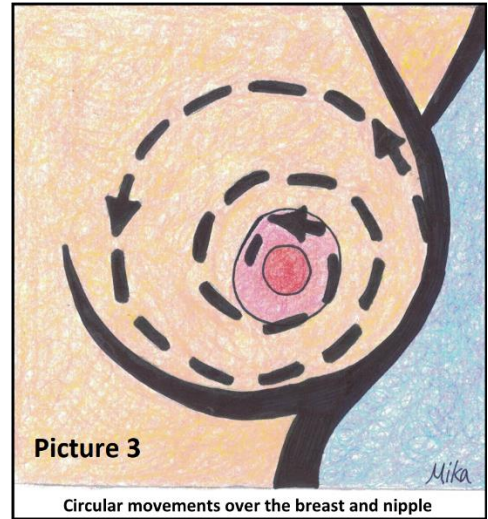
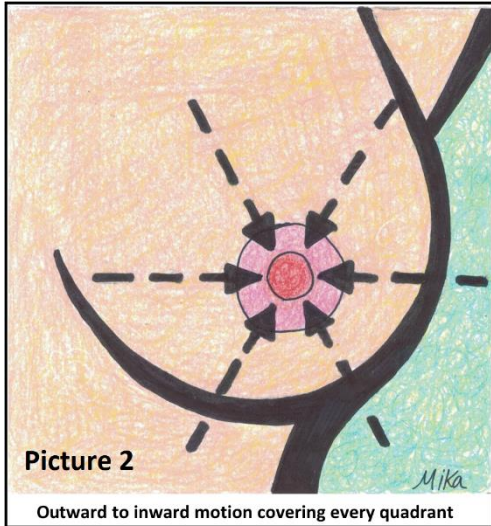
Step 1 - Stand in front of the mirror and look at your breast (picture 1). Look for changes in shape and size, any dimpling in the skin, any hyper pigmentation. Look at your nipple and look for skin changes. Raise both your hands above your head and look to see if your breast moves symmetrically. Then bend forward to see the shape and size again



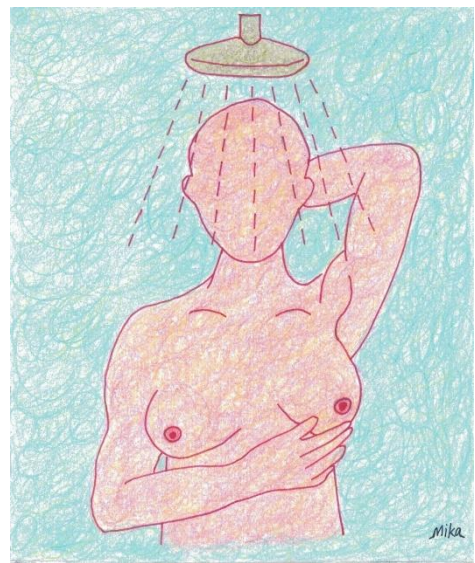
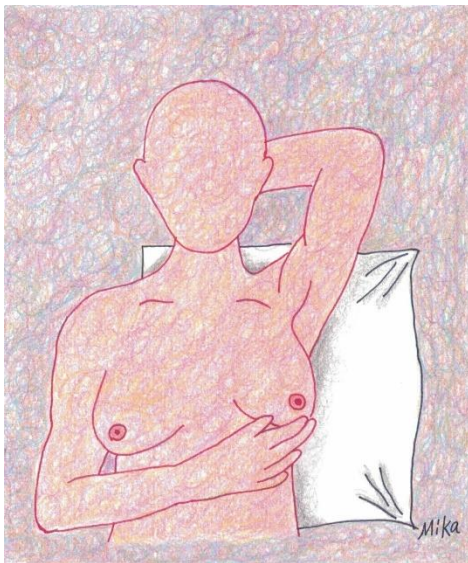
Step 2 - Place your arm behind your head and use your opposite hand (using only the flat surface of your fingers) gently move from outward to inward covering every quadrant of your breast. (see picture 2 for the direction of movement).

Following this, then move your fingers in circular movements over the breast and nipple. (See the circular motion and the directions in picture 3). Do not forget to check under the arm as well (picture 4). Gently squeeze the nipple, checking for discharge. Repeat the process on the other breast.





Step 3 - All of step 2 can be done while lying down flat, with your arm behind your head. Or can be done during shower.

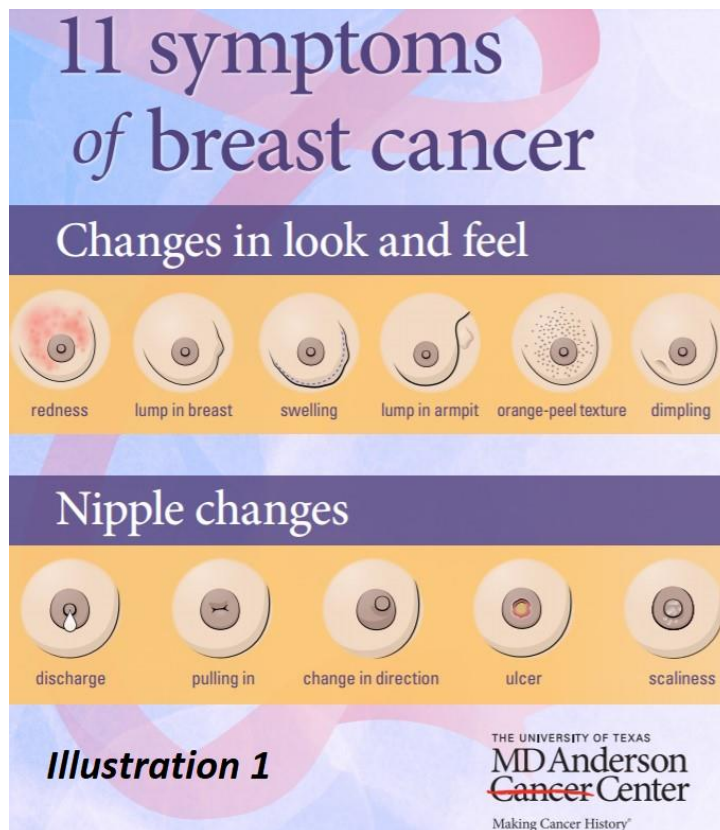


What are you looking for when you examine your breast?

- any difference in the shape and size
- any lumps
- any dimpling in the skin
- any nipple and areolar changes, like sinking in of your nipple, nipple discharge, thickening of the skin over the areola or a rash

Be Mindful of Your Breast

- Practise Self Breast Examination after the age of 20
- Schedule a clinical breast examination by your physician annually after the age of 40
- Schedule a Mammogram biannually after the age of 40



The illustration above shows the various changes in the breast that may suggest cancer. This illustration was taken from the MD Anderson Center website.
<https://www.mdanderson.org/publications/focused-on-health/breast-cancer-symptoms-you-shouldn-t-ignore.h10-1592991.html>

Early Detection Saves Lives

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Pictures taken from www.pixabay.com and illustrations done by Mika