

Breast Self-Examination Fact Sheet

Breast self-examination has been in the news lately. Are you confused about what to do? Here are some points to help you decide:

- ◆ **For women 50 and over, a combination of regular mammography (breast x-ray) plus an annual clinical breast examination provides the most effective breast screening.**
- ◆ Clinical breast examinations are performed by experienced health professionals such as your family doctor or an Ontario Breast Screening Program nurse examiner.
- ◆ Breast self-examination is a way of checking your own breasts so that you will know what is normal for you. This makes it possible for you to notice any changes. Many women or their partners have found changes that turned out to be breast cancer.
- ◆ There are benefits and risks to doing breast self-examination. Women practising breast self-examination may find a breast cancer earlier, which may make treatment easier. Scientific studies, however, have not shown that breast self-examination results in a lower death rate from breast cancer.
- ◆ Finding breast changes may cause you worry and require that you make extra visits to your doctor to arrange follow-up. This also happens with other kinds of health screening, such as mammography and clinical breast examination – but for these tests there is good scientific evidence of benefit.
- ◆ If you would like to learn how to do breast self-examination, you may watch a video and read a pamphlet. You will be asked if you want to learn breast self-examination.
- ◆ Whether or not you do breast self-examination, you should know your own body. **See your doctor right away if you notice any breast changes.**

The Ontario Breast Screening Program is a program of Cancer Care Ontario

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