

# Self-Examination for Breast Health

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in Australia, accounting for around 28% of all new cases. On average, 58 Australians are diagnosed with breast cancer every day, with an estimated 21,194 diagnoses in 2024. Early detection and performing a simple self-check each month can help you notice changes early.



## Why It Matters

While mammograms and clinical exams are essential for detecting abnormalities, self-examination is your first line of defence. It helps you become familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel, so you can quickly identify any changes. Many people who discover breast lumps or unusual changes do so during casual self-checks, even in the shower or while dressing.

## How to Perform a Self-Exam



### 1 In the Mirror

- Stand with arms at your sides, then raised overhead.
- Look for changes in shape, size, or skin (dimpling, puckering, redness, or rash).
- Check for nipple changes (inversion, discharge).



### 2 In the Shower

- Use 3 fingers in a circular motion.
- Move from the outside of the breast toward the nipple, feeling for lumps or thickened tissue.
- Cover the entire breast and armpit area where breast tissue extends.



### 3 Lying Down

- Lie on your back and place a pillow under your shoulder.
- Raise your arm above your head and use the opposite hand to examine each breast.
- Repeat the same circular motion, checking thoroughly.

## What to Do If You Notice a Change

Noticing a lump, change, or unusual symptom during your breast self-exam can feel alarming, but most changes are not cancerous. Here's what to do next:

### STEP 1: DON'T PANIC

Many breast changes are caused by hormones, cysts, or benign conditions. Try to stay calm while you monitor and follow up.

### STEP 3: SEE YOUR GP

Book an appointment with your general practitioner promptly. They may perform a clinical breast exam and refer you for imaging like an ultrasound or mammogram.



### STEP 2: TAKE NOTE

Record key details to share with your doctor, such as when the change first appeared, whether it has grown or altered in shape, and if you've experienced any pain.

### STEP 4: STAY CALM

Needing further tests doesn't always mean something serious. Staying informed and acting early gives you the best chance for peace of mind and effective care.