

# Beating breast cancer



**October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In South Africa, it is estimated that 1 in 29 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Breast cancer is one of the top 10 female cancers in South Africa but if it's detected early it's highly treatable. Performing monthly breast self-examinations is therefore extremely important.**

There are five steps to perform a proper breast self-examination.

1. Stand in front of the mirror with your shoulders straight and your hands on your hips. Check that your breasts are the usual size, shape, and colour. Check that there is no visible distortion or swelling. If you see any dimpling, puckering, or bulging of the skin, nipple changes, redness, soreness, rash, or swelling, visit your doctor immediately.
2. Do the same visual examination in front of the mirror, this time with your arms lifted above your head.
3. Check that there is no liquid, watery, milky, yellow, or blood, coming out the nipple by gently squeezing the breast.

4. Lying down, use your left hand to check your right breast, and then your right hand to check your left breast. Keeping the fingers flat and together, use your fingertips to make circular motions around the area of the breast. Make sure to check the entire area of both breasts.
5. Do the same examination, this time standing or sitting. It may be easier to complete this step in the shower.

Remember to do a self-examination monthly to make sure that you are familiar with the feel of your breasts. If you notice any changes, either visually or to the touch, report them to your doctor immediately.

Breast cancer is highly treatable and the sooner it is diagnosed, the more treatable it is.