The importance of finding breast cancer early

The goal of screening exams for early breast cancer detection is to find cancers before they start to cause symptoms. *Screening* refers to tests and exams used to find a disease, such as cancer, in people who do not have any symptoms. *Early detection* means using an approach that allows earlier diagnosis of breast cancer than otherwise might have occurred.

Breast cancers that are found because they are causing symptoms tend to be larger and are more likely to have already spread beyond the breast. In contrast, breast cancers found during screening exams are more likely to be smaller and still confined to the breast. The size of a breast cancer and how far it has spread are some of the most important factors in predicting the *prognosis* (outlook) of a woman with this disease.

Most doctors feel that early detection tests for breast cancer save many thousands of lives each year, and that many more lives could be saved if even more women and their health care providers took advantage of these tests. Following the American Cancer Society's guidelines for the early detection of breast cancer improves the chances that breast cancer can be diagnosed at an early stage and treated successfully.

For more information:

Student Health & Wellness Center.......707-654-1170

Visit Our Website at......www.csum.edu/web/campuslife/student-center/student-health-center

24-hr Nurse Advice Line (Med Call).......800-877-0027

American Cancer Society......800-227-2345

Susan G. Komen for the cure......www.komen.org



Breast Awareness and Self-Examination



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Breast Awareness and Self-Examination

Beginning in their 20s, women should be told about the benefits and limitations of breast self-exam (BSE). Women should be aware of how their breasts normally look and feel and report any new breast changes to a health professional as soon as they are found. Finding a breast change does not necessarily mean there is a cancer

A woman can notice changes by knowing how her breasts normally look and feel and feeling her breasts for changes (breast awareness), or by choosing to use a stepby-step approach and using a specific schedule to examine her breasts.

If you choose to do BSE, the following information provides a step-by-step approach for the exam. The best time for a woman to examine her breasts is when the breasts are not tender or swollen. Women who examine their breasts should have their technique reviewed during their periodic health exams by their health care professional.

How To Do a Self-Exam

In the mirror:

1) Stand undressed from the waist up in front of a large mirror in a well-lit room. Look at your breasts. Don't be alarmed if they do not look equal in size or shape. Most women's breasts aren't. With your arms relaxed by your sides, look for any changes in size, shape, or position, or any changes to the skin of the breasts. Look for any skin puckering, dimpling, sores, or discoloration. Inspect your nipples and look for any sores, peeling, or change in the direction of the nipples.

- 2) Next, place your hands on your hips and press down firmly to tighten the chest muscles beneath your breasts. Turn from side to side so you can inspect the outer part of your breasts.
- 3) Then bend forward toward the mirror. Roll your shoulders and elbows forward to tighten your chest muscles. Your breasts will fall forward. Look for any changes in the shape or contour of your breasts.
- 4) Now, clasp your hands behind your head and press your hands forward. Again, turn from side to side to inspect your breasts' outer portions. Remember to inspect the border underneath your breasts. You may need to lift your breasts with your hand to see this area.
- 5) Check your nipples for discharge (fluid). Place your thumb and forefinger on the tissue surrounding the nipple and pull outward toward the end of the nipple. Look for any discharge. Repeat on your other breast.

In the shower:

- 6) Now, it's time to feel for changes in the breast. It is helpful to have your hands slippery with soap and water. Check for any lumps or thickening in your underarm area. Place your left hand on your hip and reach with your right hand to feel in the left armpit. Repeat on the other side.
- 7) Check both sides for lumps or thickenings above and below your collarbone.
- 8) With hands soapy, raise one arm behind your head to spread out the breast tissue. Use the flat part of your fingers from the other hand to press gently into the breast. Follow an up-and-down pattern along the breast, moving from bra line to collarbone. Continue the pattern until you have covered the entire breast. Repeat on the other side.



Lying down:

9) Next, lie down and place a small pillow or folded towel under your right shoulder. Put your right hand behind your head. Place your left hand on the upper portion of your right breast with



fingers together and flat. Body lotion may help to make this part of the exam easier.

- 10) Think of your breast as a face on a clock. Start at 12 o'clock and move toward 1 o'clock in small circular motions. Continue around the entire circle until you reach 12 o'clock again. Keep your fingers flat and in constant contact with your breast. When the circle is complete, move in one inch toward the nipple and complete another circle around the clock. Continue in this pattern until you've felt the entire breast. Make sure to feel the upper outer areas that extend into your armpit.
- 11) Place your fingers flat and directly on top of your nipple. Feel beneath the nipple for any changes. Gently press your nipple inward. It should move easily.

