

What can you expect during a clinical breast exam?

- The exam is done in a private room.
- You will need to remove all clothing above your waist.
- You may want someone else to be in the room. Ask one of the female staff, a friend or family member to be present.

Talking about your breast health is an important part of your medical exam.

Your examiner will **talk** to you about the following:

- Your health history and risk for breast cancer.
- Questions or concerns about your breasts.
- Each step of the exam.
- Your comfort during the exam.

Talk with your examiner about:

- The areas of your breast that don't look or feel right to you.
- Information or words that you do not understand.
- Screenings or tests that you may need.
- Written materials about breast health, breast self-exam (BSE) and mammograms.

"Early Detection is the Best Protection."

If you are a woman age 21 to 64, call

1-800-450-4611

to find out if you qualify for free breast and cervical cancer screenings through the Best Chance Network.



Special thanks to the California Department of Health Services, Professional Education Unit, Cancer Detection Section for the original illustrations and content of this brochure.

www.scdhec.gov/bcn

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What to Expect During a Clinical Breast Exam

A clinical breast exam, done by a doctor or nurse, should be part of your **regular health care**. This brochure can help you understand the exam.

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

During the Exam

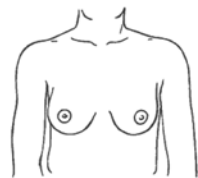
While sitting:

The examiner looks at your breasts to see if there are any changes in the shape, skin or the nipple. You may be asked to put your arms in the following positions:

- A) Arms relaxed at the side
- B) Arms above head
- C) Hands on hips



The lymph nodes above and below your collarbone and in your underarm area are checked for any swelling.



A) Arms relaxed at the side



B) Arms above head



C) Hands on hips



While lying down:

Your breast tissue is checked with the pads of the three middle fingers. This will help the examiner feel all of your breast tissue.



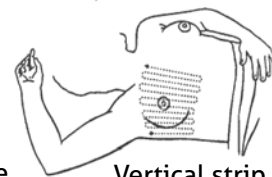
Pads of fingers

The breast tissue covers a large area – from your collar bone to the bra line and from the breastbone to the middle of your underarm.



Area of breast tissue

The examiner performs a clinical breast exam (CBE) using a pattern of search. A good pattern is the vertical strip. This pattern moves up and down the breast in even rows. It will cover every part of the breast, including the nipple.



Vertical strip pattern

The examiner feels your breast tissue using three levels of pressure – light, medium, and deep. These three pressures help to feel all the layers of breast tissue where lumps may be found. Sometimes feeling the deep tissue may cause some discomfort. But feeling this deep tissue is very important.

Pressures: Light



Medium



Deep



End of Exam

- You may want the option to learn how to check your own breasts so that you can learn what is normal breast tissue for you.
- You and the examiner will talk about a plan of regular screening and follow-up that is best for you.

What can you do to take care of your breasts?

- Follow a healthy diet and limit alcohol.
- Improve your chances for a healthy life by finding breast cancer early.
- A plan for good breast health includes the following:

1. Get a Clinical Breast Exam done by a doctor or nurse practitioner or physician's assistant.

Age
20 to 39

Every three years

2. Get a Mammogram (an X-ray of the breast).

Age
40 and older - Every year

3. Breast Self-Exam is an optional exam that women can choose to do monthly or do irregularly.

Age
Beginning at age 20

