

Why is it important to do a self-examination of your breasts? Early detection of breast cancer can provide the greatest possibility of successful treatment. The following three steps will help you detect breast cancer early on.

Step 1: Awareness

Understanding what to look for is the first and most important step. Changes you should keep an eye out for include the following:

- A lump or thickness in or near the breast/underarm area
- A change in size/shape of the breast
- Dimpling/puckering in the skin of the breast
- Nipple turned inward into the breast and/or discharge from the nipple
- Scaly, red or swollen on the breast, nipple, or areola

Step 2: Well-Women Exam

It is recommended that a woman should get a Well-Woman Exam each year by their gynecologist or family physician. A brief breast exam may be performed by the doctor to check for abnormalities in addition to the routine pelvic and pap smear exams. The Well-Woman Exam is a great opportunity for an individual to discuss any questions or concerns they may have regarding their breasts with a health care provider.

Step 3: Mammogram

Signs of breast cancer are not often displayed in the early stages. This is why it is important for women 40 years of age and older to go for an annual mammogram. A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast that can help detect cancerous tumors and other abnormal breast conditions. Mammograms can detect cancer and other problems before a lump becomes large enough to be detected by touch. Finding breast cancer in the early stages allows for treatment to be most effective.