

# Make Every Month Breast Cancer Awareness Month By Performing A Self Exam

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Self exams are a crucial component of staying cancer-free, say the experts at Valley Hospital. Photo Credit: *Valley Hospital*

RIDGEWOOD, N.J. -- While October is a month known for pumpkin picking, hayrides and beautiful fall foliage, it's also synonymous with breast cancer awareness. However, by performing regular breast self-exams throughout the year instead of in October only, cancer can be identified and treated with a greater success rate.

The first step to properly performing a breast self-exam is for you to become familiar with your body so that you can be cognizant of any changes that may occur. Once you've become familiar, there are many ways to perform a self exam. The National Breast Cancer Foundation shares several techniques below for performing regular check-ups on your own.

**In the Shower:** Using the pads of your fingers, move around your entire breast in a circular pattern moving from the outside to the center, checking the entire breast and armpit area. Check both breasts each month feeling for any lump, thickening, or hardened knot. Notice any changes and get lumps evaluated by your healthcare provider.

**In Front of a Mirror:** Visually inspect your breasts with your arms at your sides. Next, raise your arms high overhead. Look for any changes in the contour, any swelling, or dimpling of the skin, or changes in the nipples. Next, rest your palms on your hips and press firmly to flex your chest muscles. Look for any dimpling, puckering, or changes, particularly on one side.

**Lying Down:** When lying down, the breast tissue spreads out evenly along the chest wall. Place a pillow under your right shoulder and your right arm behind your head. Using your left hand, move the pads of your fingers around your right breast gently in small circular motions covering the entire breast and armpit area. Use light, medium, and firm pressure. Squeeze the nipple; check for discharge and lumps. Repeat these steps for your left breast.

If you have any concerns about your breast health, you should contact your physician as soon as possible. The Valley Breast Center provides comprehensive breast health services by a multidisciplinary team of experienced physicians, physician assistants, nurses, technologists, and other support professionals who work together to coordinate all aspects of a woman's breast care.

If you wish to make a mammogram or bone density appointment, please call 201-447- 8600.

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