

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance specialists at VistaNational Insurance Group, Inc.

Take Charge of Breast Health

Perform breast self-exams for early cancer detection

According to the Mayo Clinic, breast self-exams (BSEs) are extremely useful measures in helping women become familiar with the look and feel of their breasts while they are healthy. In doing regular exams, women can determine if there are changes in their breast tissue, thus indicating breast cancer or other potentially harmful conditions.

Conducting a Self-Exam

The American Cancer Society recommends the following technique for conducting a BSE:

- Lie down and place one arm behind your head.
- Use the pads of your middle three fingers on the opposite hand (left hand for right breast and right hand for left breast) to check your breast tissue in overlapping, dime-sized circular motions.
- Use an up-and-down pattern starting from your underarm and moving all the way to the

middle of your breastbone to feel for changes.

- Standing with your hands on your hips, look in a mirror for changes in size, shape, contour or coloring of your breasts.

Breast Tissue Changes

Contact your doctor if you notice any of the following changes to your breast or nipple tissue while doing a self-exam:

- Lumps that differ from normal breast tissue
- Dimpling skin
- Red or scaly skin
- Nipple discharge or pain

It is normal for breast tissue to change during menstrual cycles, pregnancy, menopause, or while taking birth control pills or other hormone therapy. However, if you notice changes at other times in your life, it is strongly suggested

that you visit a doctor immediately.

More in-depth information on how to perform a BSE is available at www.5komen.org. This site also provides a Breast Self-Awareness Interactive Tool that you can view. Or, check out this diagram on www.breastcancer.org, which illustrates how to perform a thorough self-exam.



Did You Know...?

Don't forget your annual gynecological visit! When visiting your physician for your annual exam, your doctor will also conduct a breast exam to look and feel for changes to your breast tissue. This is a critical part of your disease prevention care.