

# HOW TO EXAMINE YOUR BREASTS

This simple procedure only takes ten minutes of your time once a month.

You should get to know your breasts – how they normally look and feel – so that you can detect any recent changes.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ❖ Nipple direction: any change in direction of a nipple – turning inwards or at an unusual angle.
- ❖ Nipple secretions: bleeding or weeping.
- ❖ Changes in the dark skin surrounding the nipple (areola): puckering or swelling.
- ❖ Lumps: most lumps are harmless, but new ones or old ones which increase in size should be checked by your doctor.
- ❖ Thickened tissue: a sudden change in size or shape of thick tissue often found in the upper and underneath areas of heavy breasts.
- ❖ Bulge on the surface of the breast.
- ❖ "Orange peel" skin: unusually enlarged pores anywhere on the breast may be an indication that a tumour is blocking the channels which carry lymph fluid.
- ❖ Dimples.
- ❖ Swelling: of the upper arm, or in the armpit, or just above the breast.

## WHEN TO CHECK YOUR BREASTS

You should check your breasts once a month during the week following your period. After the menopause, or if you are pregnant, or nursing examine your breasts on the first day of the month.

# BREAST SELF-EXAMINATION THREE EASY STEPS

## 1. IN THE SHOWER OR BATH:

fingers slide easier over wet skin – so with the flat of your hand move gently over each breast in a circular motion. Check for any lump, hard knot or thickening



## 2. IN FRONT OF A MIRROR:

HANDS BY SIDES: Look at your breasts with your arms at your sides while slowly rotating your upper body from side to side



HANDS ON HEAD: Next put your hands on your head and look for dimples or bulges in your breasts, particularly underneath. Dimples which are equal in size and shape and occur in both breasts are normally harmless.

HANDS OVER HEAD: Then, raise your arms high above your head and look again for any changes – especially in the nipple area.



HANDS ON HIPS: Finally, rest your palms on your hips and press down firmly while holding the shoulders back so that your chest muscles are flexed. Check for any changes in appearance.

During each of these four steps you should rotate your upper body from side to side. By regular inspection you will see what is normal for you.

## 3. LYING DOWN:

Put a pillow or fold a towel under



your right shoulder and place your right arm behind your head. With the flat of your left hand press gently in small circular motions around an imaginary clock face. Start at the top of the breast for 12 o'clock and move in a clockwise circle until you return to 12 again. Then move in one inch and repeat. Keep doing this until you reach the nipple. This procedure should take at least four circles in total.



Repeat this process with the pillow under your left shoulder and your left arm behind your head.

Finally, gently pinch each nipple between thumb and index finger. Any secretion, particularly if it comes from a single pore, should be checked by your doctor.