



Texas Breast Center Releases Tips on Breast Self-Exams for Breast Cancer Awareness Month

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Valerie Gorman, MD, FACS, a breast surgeon at the Texas Breast Center in Waxahachie, released an article, "Breast Self-Exams: What to Look For," to help people with breasts understand the importance of frequent breast exams. The purpose of this article is to help clarify how these exams help with breast cancer screening, while also teaching proper techniques for the breast self-check.

Dr. Gorman discusses risk factors that could contribute to breast cancer, such as tobacco and alcohol use, HRT, age, and early menstruation. An increase in risk should also raise awareness and familiarity with one's own breasts so that any changes will be noticed. The self-exam is crucial in giving you this familiarity. Dr. Gorman explains that the exams "provide valuable insight. It is easiest to spot changes in your breast if you are familiar with your own breasts in the first place. If you are doing a regular breast self-exam, you will be ready to catch anything out of the ordinary—whether that be during your exam or while getting dressed."

To perform a breast self-exam, she explains, one will first Look at the breasts, and then Feel them for anything out of the ordinary. The Look step involves holding a few poses in front of a mirror and checking various angles for changes in skin texture, breast size, or nipple comfort.

The Feel portion involves systematically feeling over every part of the breast at different pressures?to explore different breast tissue depths?in case there are any lumps or underlying changes. It is best to set a specific pattern for this step, and every time the check is performed to keep one's findings consistent.

If something does seem unusual, take the time to feel it out. Dr. Gorman explains, "Your fingers can detect the most common criteria for a cancerous lump during your breast self-exam. The lump will be a firm, often painless mass. The edges are sometimes irregular. If you have a lump that is getting larger over time, that may also be a cause for concern."

However, not every cancerous lump will meet these criteria, and some noncancerous lumps will. Those who are concerned about anything they find, Dr. Gorman is happy to answer any questions they have and, if necessary, help set up a treatment plan. She is certified by the American Board of Surgery and serves as the Chief of Surgery and Medical Director of Surgical Services at Baylor Scott and White Medical Center.

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