



INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDANCE

How to do a breast self-exam

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Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer disease in women worldwide

Every year, about 5,500 female patients in Austria will be faced with a diagnosis of “breast cancer”. Though being the most common malignancy, female breast cancer is usually not the cancer type involving the highest risk for the patient. Because most cases of breast cancer will be curable, if detected and treated early.

For some years now, the number of women dying of breast cancer has been regressing. One of the reasons for this development is improved early detection. While early detection of breast cancer will not prevent its occurrence, it will nevertheless help in detecting it at an early stage. The less advanced the stage of breast cancer disease is, the higher will usually be the chances of healing and cure.

However, you can contribute your own share in reducing your personal breast cancer risk so as to prevent occurrence of the disease at all. Because many risk factors of breast cancer may be reduced by a healthy lifestyle.

- Women regularly doing **exercise and sports** show a decreased breast cancer risk.
- **Alcohol** will increase the risk of breast cancer. For this reason, it is recommended consuming alcohol only in small quantities and not on a daily basis.
- A balanced **diet and nutrition** with a lot of fruits and vegetables may also be helpful in avoiding overweight and thus reduce the risk of breast cancer.

This brochure is to help you informing yourself about the Austrian Breast Cancer Early Detection Program. It also includes instructions on self-examination of your breast and useful links to breast cancer information websites.

Please always remember that doing the breast self-exams will not be a substitute for undergoing regular early detection assessments.



The Austrian Breast Cancer Early Detection Program

In Austria, the Austrian Breast Cancer Early Detection Program has been established in 2014. This program has been jointly initiated and established by federal agencies, social security services, federal provinces and the Austrian Chamber of Physicians and is to serve the following 2 primary purposes and objectives:

- **Reducing the number of female deaths as a result of breast cancer.**
- **Ensuring the quality of mammography as evaluation for the early detection of breast cancer.**

FOR WHOM IS MAMMOGRAPHY MEANINGFUL FOR EARLY DETECTION?

The risk of breast cancer is associated with age. Women aged between 50 and 69 years will derive a maximum benefit of a breast cancer early detection program. Within the framework of the Breast Cancer Early Detection Program participation is primarily recommended for women aged between 45 and 69 years.

As an important criterion for early detection the examinations are to be done regularly and at the recommended time intervals.

You are younger than 40 years?

Worldwide, there are no recommendations for a regular mammography for the early detection of breast cancer in females younger than 40 years. If you experience any particular complaints or problems, make sure to consult the doctor you trust; he/she will be able at any time to refer you for a diagnostic mammography.

You are between 40 and 45 years of age, or you are aged 70 years or above?

You would like to have a breast cancer early detection evaluation? If so, you can register for a one-time evaluation with the Breast Cancer Early Detection Program.

Internet: www.frueh-erkennen.at

Phone: 0800 500 181

When registering by phone, your e-card (social security card) will be activated while you're on the phone. You can then attend the early detection examination every 2 years using your e-card.

We recommend discussing your participation in the program with your doctor and/or obtain online information on the program at www.frueh-erkennen.at.

You are between 45 and 69 years of age?

If you are between 45 and 69 years of age, you may undergo an early detection mammography every 2 years using your activated e-card. Your e-card will be automatically activated for this purpose. You do not have to register. As a reminder for the examination you will receive a reminder letter every two years.

We recommend talking to your doctor before having the examination.

The quality of the mammography has been full ensured.

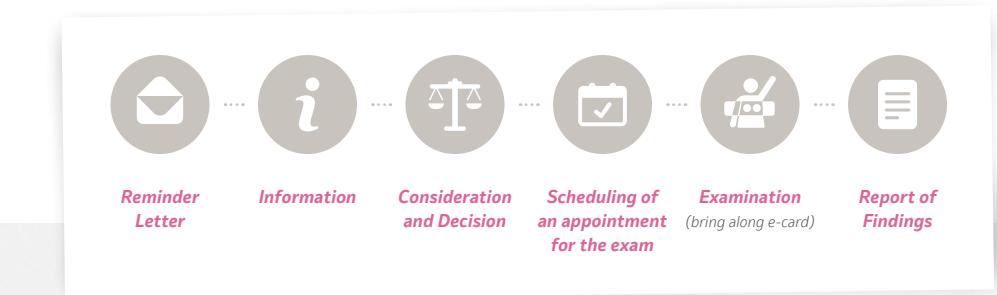
The Breast Cancer Early Detection Program will make sure that you can rely on the top quality of the mammography. For this purpose, the following measures have been implemented:

- For the mammography only state-of-the-art digital X-ray units will be used. The units will be subject to regular inspection and check-up.

- All X-ray professionals being involved in the program have undergone a specialized training. They are highly experienced in mammography and will need to document and confirm that they have reviewed and evaluated a certain minimum number of mammographic examinations every year.
- All X-ray images will be inspected and reviewed by two X-ray professionals, who will evaluate the examination independently of each other.
- The other professional staff involved in the mammography have also undergone special training and dispose of a lot of experience with the taking of X-ray photographs. For quality reasons the results of any examinations will be appropriately assessed. This is called evaluation. In doing so the rules and regulations concerning confidentiality of data will be strictly observed.

HOW DOES THE MAMMOGRAPHY EXAM WORK?

The procedure of a mammography examination is quite simple to explain:



1. If you want to have a **breast cancer early detection examination**: schedule an appointment with one of the facilities taking part in the program. A list of facilities in your federal/province will be included in your reminder letter. You can also find this list at www.frueh-erkennen.at.
2. **Important!** The ideal time for a mammography is during your menstrual period or within the first week after the period. Please make sure to consider this when scheduling a date for your examination.

3.

On the day of your examination, please **do not use any deodorant, powder or cream** on your breast and on your shoulders and under your armpits.

4.

Please bring along the following on the day of your examination: **your e-card, any images of a previous mammography you still have.** If you have been referred by your doctor, please also bring along the **referral letter.** In this case, your doctor will also automatically receive the report on the results of the examination. You will receive your findings from your X-ray doctor.

5.

You will receive the **results** of your early detection examination from your X-ray doctor.

What will happen during the examination?

You will have the mammography at the institution you selected. During the examination you will be attended by a radiology technologist. These professionals have received a special training for x-ray and radiographic procedures.

For this examination you will have to strip to the waist. Therefore, it may be easier, if you do not wear a dress. A pair of pants or a skirt would possibly be easier. The examination will only take a few minutes.

After the examination has been completed, two X-ray doctors will review the photographs/images and assess them. If at least one of the two doctors believes that an additional examination will be needed, the two will consult once again and take a decision together.

We are fully aware that waiting for the results of the examination may be a burden for you. Therefore, the X-ray institution will communicate the results to you after 7 business days at the latest. The results of the medical examination are called "findings". The report of findings will explain what could be identified on the X-ray images and whether additional examinations will be required.

You may also pick up the report of findings yourself at the x-ray institution.

If the report contains any abnormal findings, your X-ray doctor will invite you for a consultation. However, an abnormal finding does not necessarily mean that you have breast cancer!

Limitations of the early detection of breast cancer

The Breast Cancer Early Detection Program will not prevent breast cancer. But in many cases, the chances of healing and cure will be much better, if the cancer is identified early on.

DIAGNOSTIC MAMMOGRAPHY

If a mammography is required for medical reasons, this is called a diagnostic mammography.

For a diagnostic mammography you will be referred by your doctor at any age and as often as needed. This examination will also be paid by your health insurance. However, depending on your health insurance the costs may be subject to a deductible. Below you can find some reasons for doing a diagnostic mammography:

- Particular complaints
- Signs suggestive of breast cancer
- Evidence of breast cancer
- Follow-up treatment of breast cancer
- Family-associated breast cancer risk, i.e. if close relatives suffer or have suffered from breast cancer

SELF-EXAM

in front of the mirror



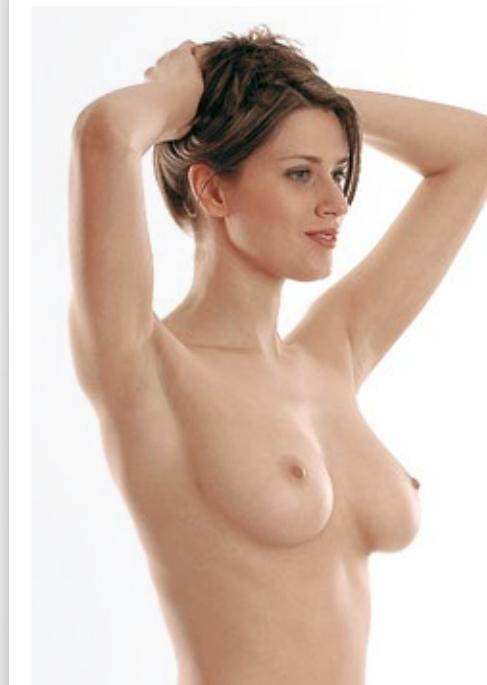
Stand in front of the mirror and stem your arms against your hips.

Check for any changes in size, shape and skin surface of your breasts and your nipples.



Lift up your arms. Your breasts must follow the movement of your arms.

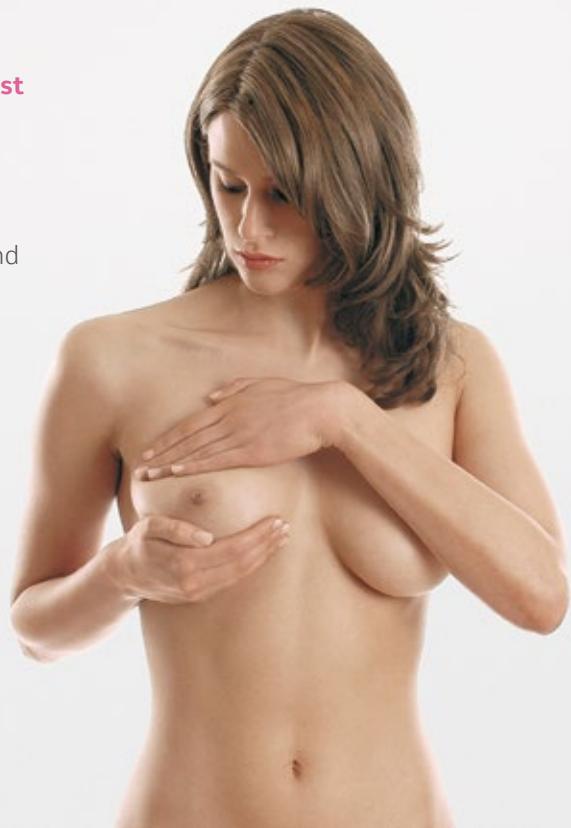
Inspect the shape and the size of your breasts both from the front and from both sides.



Bend your body slightly towards the side of the breast you want to examine.

Gently lift up the breast with your hand of the same side and feel up your breast with the other hand stroking the hand down gently.

Repeat the same procedure for the other side and make sure not to leave out any area.



Circle and grip up your nipple and press it between your thumb and your index finger.

If you can see any fluid emerge from your nipple, please contact your doctor immediately.

You should also touch and feel up the halo of your nipple, i.e. the areola.



For ensuring a better gliding effect you can also apply fluid or cream on your skin for this exam.

PALPATING

for lumps



Feel up your entire breast with all fingers of your hand placed flat on the breast.

Exert slight pressure on your breast using circular movements for feeling any changes under your skin. You will need to apply somewhat more pressure for regions with deeper tissue.

Carefully palpate and feel up every quarter of your breast and especially take care to note whether the tissue under the skin proves difficult to move and shift.

Lift one of your arms and use the opposite hand to examine the lymph nodes located in the armpit under slight pressure.

Usually the lymph nodes are not palpable; therefore, you should especially mind any newly developed indurations or lumps.

Repeat the same procedure for the other side.



Lower and relax your arm and repeat the palpatory examination of the lymph nodes.

Repeat the examination on the other side. When examining your breasts and your armpits, watch out especially for any changes as compared with your last self-exam and make sure to notify your doctor, if needed.

You should also IMMEDIATELY inform your gynecologist of any changes!



AIM OF THE SELF-EXAM

The instructions for the breast self-examination illustrate and describe how to proceed for the self-examination and what to look out for. The self-exam will need to be done at monthly intervals. The best timing for the self-examination is the first week after the onset of your menstrual period. During the menopause you should ideally chose a fixed monthly date.

Regular breast self-examination should become a matter-of-course for you.

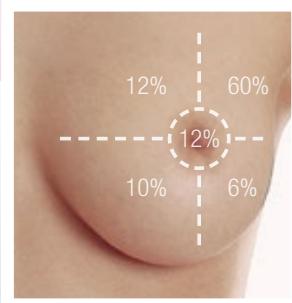
Every woman can contribute a lot for making sure that any potentially malignant disease is already recognized and identified at a very early stage. The sooner a malignant disease is diagnosed and treated, the higher will be the chances of a mitigating therapy and a full and complete cure.

More than half of all breast changes are detected by the women themselves, frequently during everyday activities like taking a shower or creaming up their body.

Please make sure to immediately tell your doctor of any changes.

Signs of breast disease may include:

- Lumps or induration of tissue
- Limited mobility of the breasts
- Dents, changes of shape and of the size of breasts
- Tenderness, tightness or burning in the breast
- Skin changes and reddening
- Coarse, eczema-like surface of breast nipples
- Newly emerging inversion of nipples
- Bloody discharge from the nipple
- Palpable lymph nodes in the armpits



Breast cancer mostly develops unilaterally

When dividing the breast into quadrants, the highest share of breast cancer is seen in the upper external quadrant.

ENSURING EARLY DETECTION

The monthly self-examination is an excellent opportunity for the early identification of any changes. Nevertheless, it is certainly no appropriate substitute for a regular mammography or a regular breast examination with your gynecologist!

Mammography in case of menopausal complaints treated with drug therapy

Women suffering from burdensome menopausal complaints treated with conventional hormone replacement therapy may potentially show an increased breast density. High breast density may make the evaluation and interpretation of mammography more problematic and, consequently, may also make early diagnosis more difficult.

Please consult your gynecologist regarding an appropriate therapy and medications being most appropriate – from a state-of-the-art perspective – for relieving burdensome menopausal complaints while simultaneously showing the least negative effect on your breast tissue.

“Breast self-examination is an important part of early detection of cancer. Even if it has been shown in the meantime that breast self-examination alone will not be capable of reducing cancer mortality, it will nevertheless result in a more intense awareness of one's own health (“breast awareness”). Because women regularly doing a breast self-examination have been shown to utilize the available options of early detection of cancer to a much better extent. Therefore, self-examination will continue to render an important contribution towards the motivation for and an enhanced awareness of breast cancer early detection. Please consult your gynecologist on the options and limitations of breast cancer early detection measures.”

Univ. Prof. Dr. Christian Singer

**Breast self-exam:
Once every month**

**Breast
examination by
the gynecologist:
Once every year**

**Mammography as of
the age of 40 years
Every 2 years**

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More information
can be obtained at
www.frueh-erkennen.at

Scientific support and advice:

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Physician's Stamp



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