A Self-Advocate’s Guide To Breast Health

Created by the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council.

Inclusive Healthcare Partnership Project
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**What is breast cancer?**

Breast cancer is the 2nd most diagnosed cancer in women. Doctors will look for this cancer by checking your breasts, nipples, and armpit.

**How do I prevent breast cancer?**

Prevention is the best medicine. The earlier you find a cancer, the easier it is for doctors to treat. You can do a check at home in your shower or in a mirror.
By age 45, most people with breasts should get an x-ray of their breasts yearly. An x-ray is the very best way to find breast cancer.

The x-ray machine is called a mammogram. The mammogram machine will press 1 breast at a time between 2 flat panels. It may be a little uncomfortable.

You can ask to bring a support person with you.

What is a breast exam with a healthcare provider like?

During your regular check-up, your healthcare provider may do a breast exam.

They will look at your breasts while you are sitting up and touch your breasts while you are laying down.
How can I do a breast self-exam?

It is good to know what your breasts look and feel like so you can notice any changes.

**In A Mirror -**

- Put your hands on your hips and bend forward a little. Look at the size and shape of each breast and nipple.
- Check for unusual swelling, lumps, dimpling (looks like an orange peel), scaly skin, or other changes.
- Check for nipple changes, such as a nipple that hurts or changes color.

**In The Shower -**

- Put your left arm behind your head.
- Use the 3 middle fingers of your right hand to do your breast self exam.
- Press your fingers against your breast and trace your breast using an up and down pattern.
- Repeat on the other breast using the same steps, but switch arms.

If you see any changes or have a question, ask your Primary Care Doctor.

**For more information:**

Contact your primary care provider or nearest Planned Parenthood with questions. Contact You First at 800-508-2222 to learn more about eligibility for free screening.
What is The Inclusive Healthcare Partnership Project?

The creators of the Inclusive Healthcare Partnership Project (IHPP) believe that everyone should have the tools they need to support their own health. This includes health information that is easy to understand. It also means that healthcare providers are prepared to work with patients with a wide range of disabilities.

IHPP has two goals. First, to create plain language health information designed by and for people with developmental disabilities. Second, to help nurses, doctors, and other providers communicate effectively with neurodiverse patients.

Want to learn more about this health topic? Want to view our sources?
Scan this QR Code or visit: http://www.ihppvt.org

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