1. Stand in front of the mirror and look at your breasts with your arms against your body. In particular, look for any changes in the shape, size and appearance of the skin or nipples which you have not noticed before.

2. Next, look at the shape and size of your breasts (each breast from the front and side) with your arms held up high. It is particularly important to look for newly-appearing or one-sided puckering, protrusions, skin retractions and changes in the skin on the breasts or nipples.

3. Then, while standing up, feel your breast with your three middle fingers with a flat, firm hand. Feel the right breast with the left hand and the left breast with the right hand. Alternately feel a quarter of each breast. The mammary gland in the upper outer quarter usually feels denser for most women.

Using a system to feel

- In a spiral shape
- In lines
- From the outside in towards the nipple.
Now squeeze each nipple between the thumb and forefinger. If a discharge appears, take note of its colour.

Then repeat this systematic examination of your breasts while lying down. Feel each quarter of your breasts with your fingers. You can examine the lower part of your breasts better in this way.

While still lying down, check with your fingers to see if you can feel your lymph nodes under your arms. This is not unusual. However, when doing this it is important to recognise whether they have only recently emerged or they have changed.

You should carry out this self-examination on a monthly basis. The best time to do it is a few days after your period. There is no cause for alarm if you notice changes to your breasts, as most changes are benign. However, you should inform your doctor about it.