

Breast examination – what to expect

You have been referred to the Breast Unit by your GP because you have a concern relating to the breast or breasts.

While you are in the hospital, you may be sent for a mammogram or an ultrasound, but at some point during your appointment, the consultant, a registrar or one of the nurse practitioners will examine your breasts. This leaflet explains what you can expect.

In a private, screened area you will be asked to undress to the waist. The clinician will inspect your breasts while you are seated and then will ask you to lie down on your back on the couch. It is usual practice for one of the nurses to be present during the examination.

The clinician will ask you where the pain or the lump is located or the problem that you are experiencing and they are likely to examine both breasts. Using the flat of their hand and their fingertips, the clinician will 'palpate' by pressing on the surface of the breast, the nipple and areola area, and also the lymph glands (in your armpits and near your collar bone).

They will be checking for any irregularities to the breast, including:

- size
- shape
- contour
- colouration
- the pattern of the veins
- skin dimpling or puckering
- nipple inversion (turning inwards) or changes to the skin of the nipple

Following the examination, the clinician may well send you for more tests. If you are worried about any test or you don't understand what has been said, please ask any of the staff in the clinic. The results of these tests may be sent to your GP or you may be asked to return to the clinic.

Contact us

If you have any problems regarding your care or treatment at this hospital, please *Talk to us*. Your feedback will help us to improve and develop our service. Please speak to a member of staff in the clinic or on the ward or if you would rather talk to a senior member of staff, ask to speak to the ward/departmental manager or matron.

Or speak to the Patient Relations Team who can offer you ‘on the spot’ support and advice as well as practical information at a time when you are feeling confused and anxious. Patient Relations can be contacted on: 0118 322 8338 or ask a member of staff, the receptionists or the switchboard to contact them.

Nurse Practitioners

Carol Lister 0118 322 8672

Vanessa Burridge 0118 322 7895

Nicky Woodrow 0118 322 7895

Clinical Admin Team (CAT 3): 0118 322 6890 email: CAT3@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

More information

If you have any questions about any procedure or this information, please speak to your doctor or nurse.

Further information and support regarding breast health is available from:

Breast Cancer Care

Freephone: 0808 800 6000, BCC is a national organisation offering free help, information and support to women with breast cancer or other breast-related problems.

For more information about the Trust visit our website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Breast Care Clinic, December 2005

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