

## Breast Health

The breast is a mound of glandular, fatty and fibrous tissue located over the pectoralis muscle of the chest and attached by fibrous strands. The breast itself has no muscle tissue, which is why exercises will not build up the breast tissue. A layer of fat surrounds the breast glands and extends throughout the breast. The fatty tissue gives the breast a soft consistency and gentle flowing contour.

Because the breast is made up of tissues with different textures, it may not be smooth and may feel lumpy. This irregularity is especially noticeable when a woman is thin and has little fat to soften the contours.

There is considerable variation in women's nipples. In some, the nipple is constantly erect; in others, it only becomes erect when stimulated by cold, physical contact or sexual activity. Still other women have inverted nipples.

Beneath the breast is the large muscle, the pectoralis major, which assists in arm movement; The breasts rests on this muscle. It also helps form the axillary fold created where the arm and chest wall meet. The axilla(armpit) is the depression behind this fold.

The breast is responsive to a complex interplay of hormones that cause the breast tissue to develop, enlarge and produce milk. Because of reduced hormonal levels, the breasts are less full for 1-2 weeks after menstrual, flow; therefore, it may be easier to detect breast lumps during this time.

Common Breast Problems: <http://www.sjbnet.com/breastproblems.htm>

1. Breast lumps
2. Fibrocystic changes

Breast Self Exam: <http://www.sjbnet.com/selfevaluation.htm>