

Is your bra hazardous to your health?

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Is your bra hazardous to your health?

By Georgia Donovan

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer found in women, and this year alone 192,000 new cases will be diagnosed in the U.S. It eventually strikes one out of every eight American women. Breast cancer also causes more deaths than any other form of cancer in women under age 55.

As women, we all fear breast cancer. It is the one disease that sends chills down our spines and puts a knot in our stomachs. I am not about to go over all the reasons why women get breast cancer or who is or isn't a high risk factor. I will leave that subject to those who are far more qualified than I, however, there is one factor that affects your breast health and that is the fit of your bra.

Right now, as you read this, 80% of all the women in America are wearing the wrong size bra. Most of them are uncomfortable and most of them are too small. Your breast is all about circulation and the flow of lymph. If you want healthy breasts, follow a regular care program, including a monthly self exam, routine visits with your doctor, and a mammogram when recommended for your age and family history, Most importantly, wear a bra that fits you.

A tight, binding, constricting, and ill fitting bra is bad for you and can cause major discomfort as well as retarding the circulation in and around your breast. So what can you do to change that? Find a bra that fits you perfectly.

This process is very simple but requires the help of an "expert". When I was growing up in Brooklyn, New York, my mother use to call them the "brassier ladies". They were mostly European born and had worked in corset shops in Europe as fitters or seamstresses. This noble group of women worked in neighborhood lingerie shops. You never bought a bra without their expertise.

They had such a trained eye that the minute any woman walked in the door they knew what size she was. They would take one look and say, "34C". It was like radar, they just knew from afar, and when they measured you, they were almost always right.

Today there is a more modern version of these women called lingerie fitters. They are in local shops (if your town is lucky to have one), or work in major department stores in the lingerie department. So your

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first step to finding the right bra is to go see one of these gals. They will take your measurements, first under your rib cage and all around your back and then across your breast. One tells what your bra size is (34, 36, 38 etc.) and the other tells your cup size (A, B, C, D etc.) Now that you know this they will usually recommend a style for your body type based on your needs. During your session, tell this person all about your basic wardrobe. Are you looking for a bra to wear under a tee shirt or a knit, one for sports or the gym, or a special occasion look? Or do you need to establish a basic bra wardrobe?

Believe me, one hour spent with one of these experts will not only save you money in the long run (by avoiding having a drawer full of ill-fitting bras you can no longer wear), but you will be saved the daily agonies of wearing bras that hurt, are too tight, dig into your shoulders or are just plain torture!

Once you have established your size and needs, then follow these simple suggestions for a long and comfy relationship with your bras.

HOW TO PUT ON A BRA

Bend forward, put the bra on, and fasten.

Look at the fit and make sure that the cup holds all of your breast. If you are spilling out, it is too small. If you have "overhang" it is too small.

Next, take your right hand and smooth the skin of the left breast into the cup. Do the same on the other side.

Stand up straight and see how the straps fit and feel. They should be comfortable without feeling like a vice. Adjust as needed until perfect.

Now, look straight ahead into a mirror and make certain that each nipple is in the CENTER of each cup.

Adjust the back of the bra so it lies smoothly between your shoulder blades.

Take a deep breathe, how does it feel?

A word about brand names. Not every manufacturer cuts the same way, that is true of bras as well as clothes. You might be a size 34C in one brand but a 34D in another. And there may be some brands you can't wear at all.

BRA DO's & DON'TS -

Do get measured again every time you lose or gain weight, after a pregnancy, or if you are on hormone replacement therapy.

Don't ever buy a bra without trying it on and stay away from the sale rack.

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Unless there is a brand and style there that you wear, pulling one off the rack because it is marked down is no bargain. Chances are it will have a long and happy life in your lingerie drawer.

Do buy an under wire style if you are full breasted and need firmer support.

Do buy a minimizer if you want to have a large breast appear smaller.

Do try one of the new soft cup bras that offer construction for a smaller breast. (Soft cup means sans under wire.)

Do throw away any and all bras that hurt you or are uncomfortable, no matter how much you paid for them.

Important points to remember

Ask a salesperson to measure you but let your eye and your body be the ultimate test. A bra shouldn't

ride up, dig into your back, or slip off your shoulders.

When trying on a bra in a store, take several, in various sizes, into the fitting room. The difference between a 34 and 36 might be one hook.

For the best fit, your bra should be fastened with the middle hook. Reevaluate your bra wardrobe at the beginning of every season. If you find a bra that you love, by all means buy more than one. Never put a bra in the dryer.

Georgia Donovan, The Clothes Doctor, is a fashion stylist and image consultant, whose mission is to help women reach their fashion potential and raise their fashion consciousness. To subscribe to her free newsletter for mature women, visit

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Choosing a Comfortable Yet Flattering Bra

By Wendy Yeager

Today's bra is not only designed to make you feel pretty and sexy, they are designed for comfort and practicality.

You can choose from an underwire bra for support or a bra without underwire. Need some help with

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adding a little extra to your bustline? Then choose a padded bra or a push up bra. Maybe youre lucky enough to have a little extra natural padding already. You could then choose from a minimizer bra.

Not shy and would like to show off your bustline? Try a bra that will show a little cleavage. You could even try an adhesive bra which can be adjusted so it wont show under any neckline.

Todays new fashions sometimes call for a bra with special straps. You could try an adjustable bra with straps which can be worn far out on the shoulders or removed to be used as a strapless bra. Maybe you like to wear halter tops. So, try a halter bra.

Of course sometimes you just want a bra to make you feel pretty. There are a wide variety of colors to choose: pink, lavender, white, black, red, etc. Also, why not try a bra with lace trim or ones made of silk or satin?

Most importantly, wear the bra that makes you feel most comfortable.

Wendy Yeager

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Choosing a Comfortable Yet Flattering Bra

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