

# BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

## I Found a Lump in My Breast. What Do I Do Now?

By Shelby Edison, Peer Health Educator 2024

It started as a normal Thursday; I sat in the library getting some reading done before I the weekend began. However, I shifted my body, and I instantly recognized something was wrong. I felt a painful lump in my breast area. From seeing breast cancer awareness campaigns, I knew it was important to go to a medical professional to ensure the lump wasn't dangerous. Still, sitting alone in the library in a bit of a panic, I wished I knew what next steps I needed to take. I hope this article can serve as a handy guide for anyone in a similar position in the future.

If you feel a lump in your breast, take a deep breath. A breast exam is a routine exam, so you are not alone. After taking a moment to calm down, you will want to reach out to a medical provider. If you already see a OB/GYN in the area, you can call them, explain your symptoms, and ask for a breast exam. If you do not already have a provider near you, you can make an appointment via the Student Health Center – Danforth Campus portal at <https://studenthealthcenter.washu.edu/contact/student-health-portal/>. Planned Parenthood also offers breast exams. You can visit their website to find the clinic nearest to you and make an appointment. Before your appointment, ensure that you know your family health history regarding breast cancer. At your appointment, the doctor or nurse will examine the lump. If they do not think the lump is a worry, your process ends here.





**If, however, they are concerned or unsure about the lump, they might refer you to get an ultrasound. My ultrasound was a different day and at a different location than my initial appointment. That's totally normal! After getting your ultrasound, your doctor will look at the scans and talk through next steps with you. After my ultrasound, my doctor concluded the lump was just a cyst. While painful, it was not dangerous, and I breathed a sigh of relief.**

**For everyone, regardless if you have felt a lump or not, it is important to check your breast area regularly. Trust your intuition; if you think something is wrong with your body, it might be a good idea to see a doctor. Most women start receiving mammograms when they are in their 40s and 50s. However, don't wait to check up on your body until then! Finding breast cancer early makes it easier to treat. Finally, although most breast cancer awareness campaigns are aimed at women, everyone can get breast cancer. No matter your sex, it's important to check for lumps and take quick action if you find one. Think of it as just another way to take care of yourself!**

Sources:

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/cancer/breast-cancer/how-can-i-protect-myself-breast-cancer>

[https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic\\_info/screening.htm#:~:text=Although%20breast%20cancer%20screening%20cannot,when%20you%20should%20have%20them.](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/screening.htm#:~:text=Although%20breast%20cancer%20screening%20cannot,when%20you%20should%20have%20them.)