

Your guide to a well-fitting bra

Why wear a bra?

The main reason for wearing a bra is to support the breasts. Breasts are made up of tissue that doesn't contain any muscle. They are supported by ligaments within the breast and the muscles behind the breast. Wearing a bra helps to support the breasts and give a defined shape. A well fitting bra will look better and be more comfortable.

The right size

Just as breasts come in all sizes so do bras, with band sizes ranging from 28 to 56 inches and cup sizes ranging from AA to K.

The band size is how the bra fits round your back and the cup size is the size of the part of the bra that holds the breasts. The shoulder straps can usually be adjusted to give a better fit.

When buying a bra following a particular size guide can help, but remember that sizes are only a guide as they vary between makes and styles. The most important thing is always to try on a bra before you buy it. You may need to try on several bras in different

styles and sizes (which vary by brand) before you find one that really fits well.

You can buy bras in fashion shops, department stores, supermarkets, specialist bra shops and by mail order or online. If you aren't able to try on your bra in the shop or it comes by post, check that you can return it if it doesn't fit properly.

Department stores and specialist bra shops usually have trained fitters who can help you find a bra that fits you properly. You can ask to be fitted – sometimes you may make an appointment in advance. The bra fitter will take you into a private fitting room to measure and fit you correctly.

Trying on a bra

The best way to put on a bra is to put your arms through the straps then lean slightly forward so the breasts fall naturally into the cups.

Adjust the underband so it lies flat against your chest underneath your breasts. Fasten the bra on the first (loosest) set of hooks and make sure the underband is level all the way round. Adjust the shoulder straps until you feel your breasts are supported into their natural position, halfway between the shoulder and the elbow.

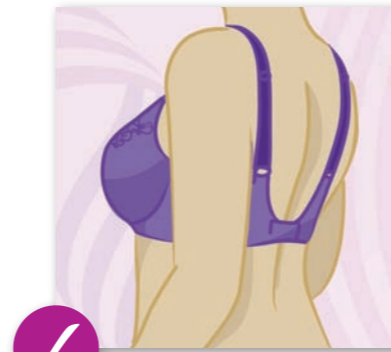
Alternatively, put the bra round your body so the hooks are at the front, fasten it, and then twist it round so the hooks are at the back. Put your arms through the shoulder straps and pull the bra cups into the correct position. Then adjust the straps and make sure the underband is level.

Look at yourself in the mirror in your bra and check:

- ✿ is the bra too tight or too loose?
- ✿ is the underband level at the front and back?
- ✿ do the shoulder straps slip down or dig in?
- ✿ does the centre of the bra between the cups sit flat on your chest?
- ✿ are the underwires lying flat against the skin or are they riding up or digging in?
- ✿ do your breasts fill the cups, are they loose so you can see a gap or are your breasts bulging over the top, bottom or sides of the cup?
- ✿ does the bra stay in place when you lift your arms up?

You may also want to check how it looks under your clothes – a light-coloured T-shirt or top can help show where the bra doesn't fit correctly.

Your bra should look good and feel supportive and comfortable – if it doesn't then keep trying.



Which bra?

If you need a multiway or strapless bra to wear with a specific outfit, such as a halter neck or strapless top, take the clothes with you so you can try them on together.

If you play sport or are very physically active, **sports bras** are designed for comfort and to give your breasts extra support during the activity.

If you are pregnant, think about buying a well supporting bra or a **maternity bra** so that you stay comfortable as your breasts get bigger. You may need to buy more than one bra during your pregnancy as your breasts change size.

If you are planning to breastfeed, towards the end of your pregnancy you may want to buy a **nursing bra**. Some have a zip on each cup for easy access, some have a fastening so the cup can drop down, while others are made of stretchy material that can be lifted over the breast. Try on different styles and try opening the cups under your clothes to check for comfort and convenience.

You can find out more about this in our booklet **Breast changes during and after pregnancy**.

Bras after breast cancer

If you've had surgery for breast cancer you may want more specialised help with finding suitable bras.

Our booklet **A confident choice: breast prostheses, bras and clothes after surgery** has lots of information and helpful tips.

Caring for your bras

Bras often go in the machine with the rest of the washing, but to get the most out of a bra, hand washing is best.

Machine washing may affect the shape and support of the bra over time, as will putting it in the tumble dryer. Try to follow the care instructions on the label, and check occasionally that any underwires are in place and the straps still have their stretch. If your bra no longer fits well, it's time to replace it.



If you have a breast cancer or breast health query contact the Breast Cancer Care Helpline on **0808 800 6000** (Text Relay **18001**) or visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Does your bra fit?

Without realising it, more than 70 per cent of women are wearing the wrong size bra at any one time.

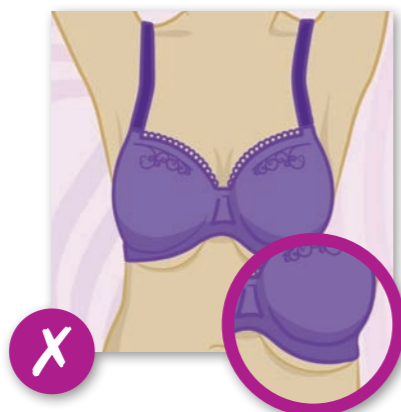
A woman's breasts change size and shape many times during her life. They can be affected by the menstrual cycle (having periods), pregnancy and breastfeeding, the menopause (when periods stop) and putting on or losing weight. Bra sizes can vary with different manufacturers, designs, fabrics and styles – so it's not surprising that many women are wearing the wrong size.

There is no link between wearing a bra, regardless of its fit, and breast cancer. These tips are to help you find a well-fitting and comfortable bra.

How should a bra fit?

The bra should...

- fit on the loosest set of hooks so that when it begins to stretch with time you can tighten it and still get a good fit
- stay in place without moving when you lift your arms above your head.



The cups should...

- be filled by the breast leaving no loose fabric



- contain the whole breast without any bulging at the top, bottom or sides.

Top tip

If your breasts are different sizes, make sure the cup fits the larger breast.

If your shoulder straps are digging in or constantly slipping down, your bra is riding up at the back or your breasts are bulging out of your bra cups, this handy guide should help.

The shoulder straps should...

- fit closely to the body without digging in



- give additional support but not carry the full weight of the breasts.

The centre of the bra, in between the cups, should...

- sit flat on the chest between your breasts.

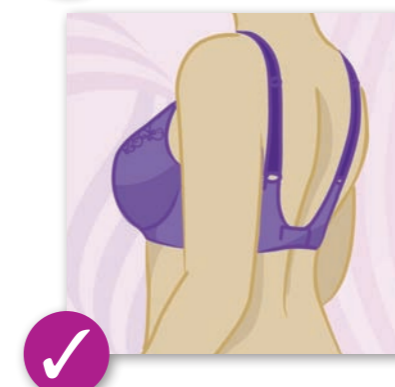
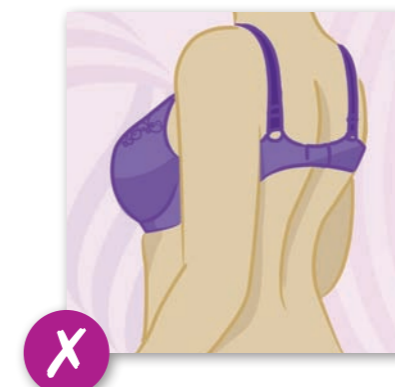


The underband should...

- fit closely to the body, not too tight or too loose

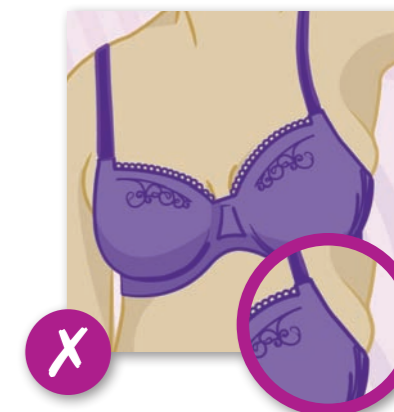


- be the same level at the front and back.



Underwires should...

- sit flat against the chest and around the contour of the breast without digging in or gaping.



Key

Underband - the band that goes under the cups and round your back.

Underwires - wires sewn in under each cup.

Get in touch

We hope you've found this guide helpful. For more information about breast awareness and breast health visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk or call our free Helpline on **0808 800 6000**.

Many thanks to La Senza, Kiss Me Deadly, Playful Promises and Miss Mandalay for providing bras for our photo shoot.