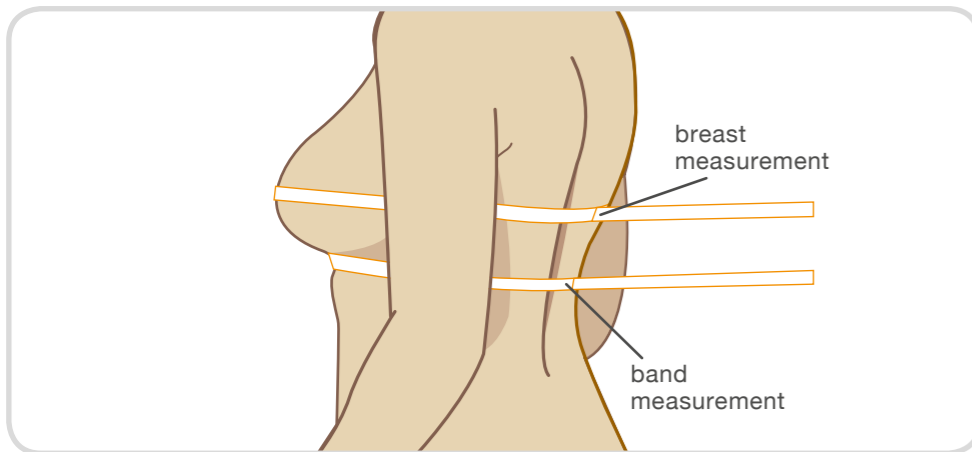


WHY wear a bra?

Breasts are made up of tissue that doesn't contain any muscle, so wearing a bra helps to support the breasts and give a defined shape. A well-fitting bra will look better and feel 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 L.

The band refers to how the bra fits round your back and the cup is the part of the bra that holds the breasts. The size of the cup is worked out by the difference in inches measured between the band size and breast size.

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 measured – sometimes you may need to make an appointment in advance.

When buying a bra, the size measured should only be used as a guide, as they vary between makes and styles even across brands.

It's really important to try on a bra before you buy it. You may need to try on several different bras (and even different sizes) before you find one that really fits well.

If you are not able to try on the bra in a shop or it comes by post, check that you can return it if it doesn't fit properly.

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.

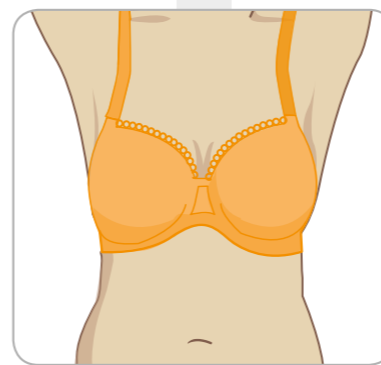
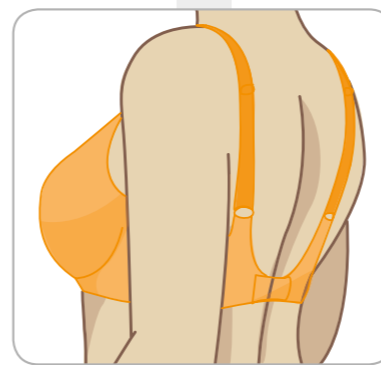
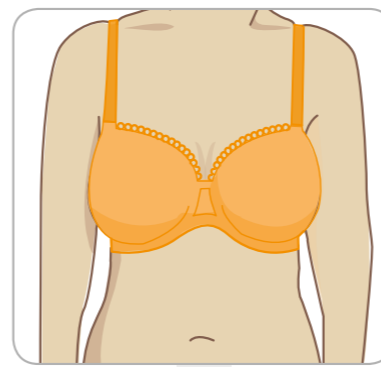
Adjust the underband so it lies flat against your chest underneath your breasts. Fasten the bra on the first (loosest) set of hooks and make sure the underband is level all the way round. Adjust the shoulder straps until you feel your breasts are supported into their natural position, halfway between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



Your guide to a well-fitting bra

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 your breasts are uncomfortable or move around a lot during physical activity, you might find it helpful to wear a sports bra. Sports bras are designed to increase comfort while minimising movement and giving your breasts extra support.

If you're 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're planning to breastfeed, towards the end of your pregnancy you may want to buy a nursing bra. 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.

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 can.

breast cancer care



YOUR GUIDE to a well-fitting bra

Bras after breast cancer

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

Our booklet **Breast prostheses, bras and clothes after surgery** has lots of information and helpful tips.



Does your bra FIT?

Studies show more than 70% of women are wearing the wrong size bra without realising it.

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)
- 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.

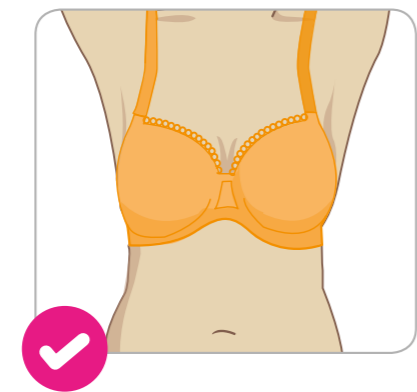
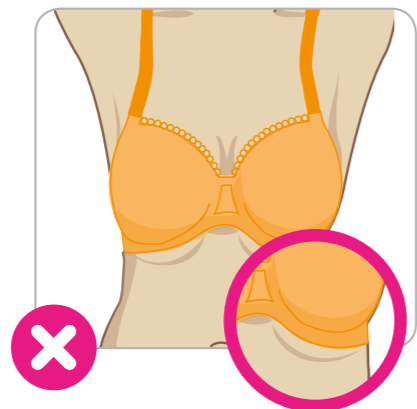
There is no link between wearing an ill-fitting bra and breast cancer. The following tips may help you find a well-fitting and comfortable bra.

How should a bra fit?

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.

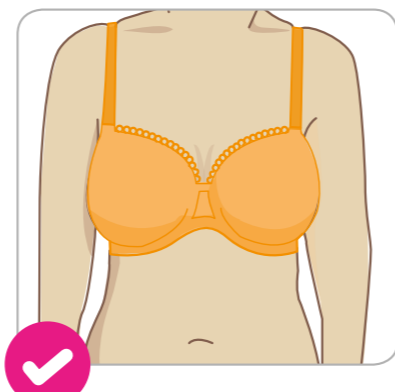
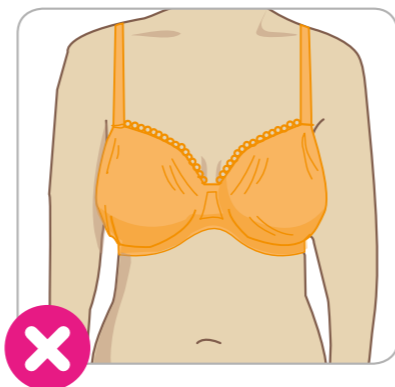
The bra should...

- 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

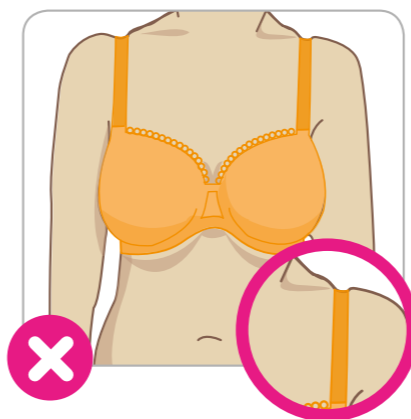
Most women have one breast larger than the other. If your breasts are different sizes, make sure the cup fits the larger breast.

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

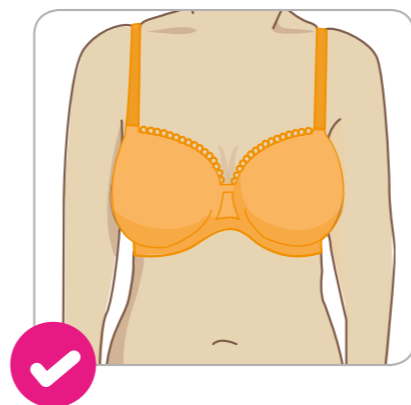
Underwires = wires sewn in under each cup.

The shoulder straps should...

- fit closely to the body without digging in
- give additional support but not carry the full weight of the breasts

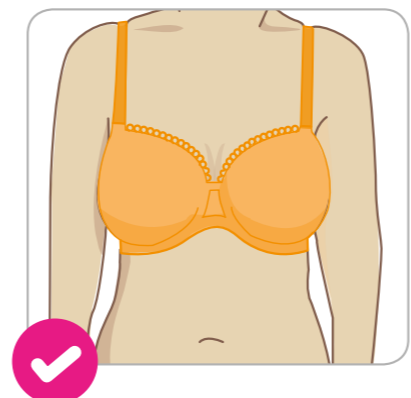


Top tip
Adjustable shoulder straps help you get the best fit.



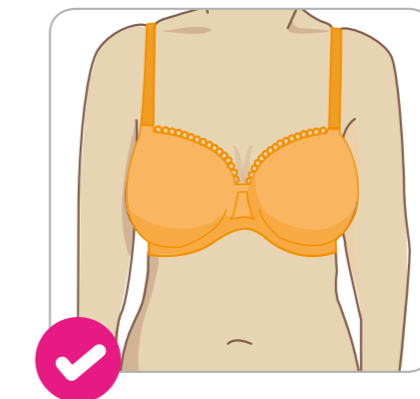
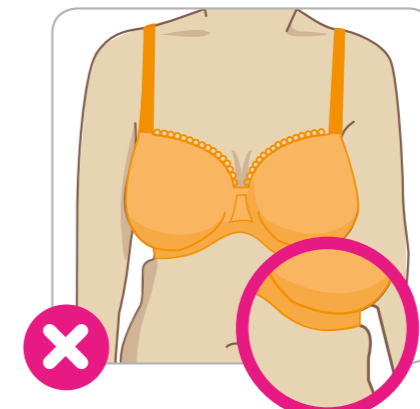
The centre of the bra, in between the cups, should...

- sit flat on the chest between your breasts

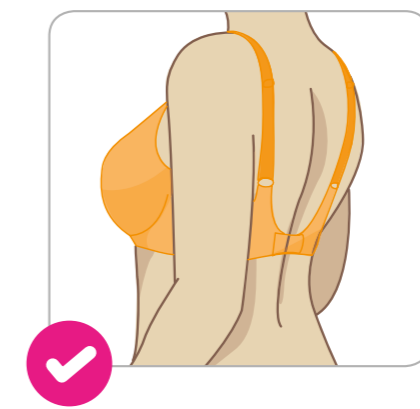
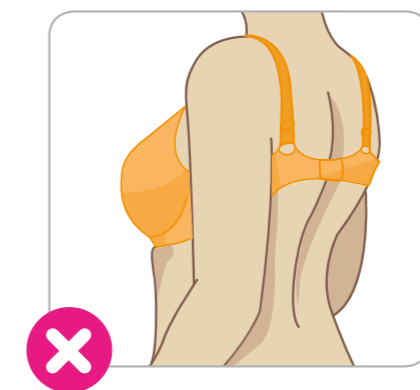


The underband should...

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

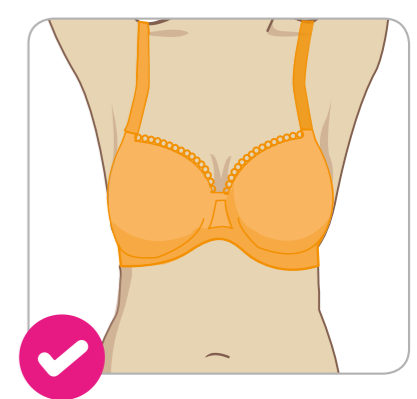
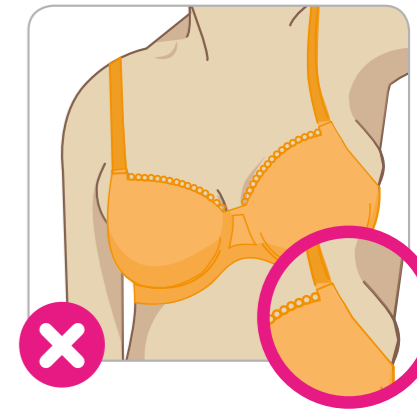


- be the same level at the front and back



Underwires should...

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



Get in touch

We hope you've found this guide helpful.

For more information about breast awareness and breast health call our free Helpline on 0808 800 6000 or visit breastcancercare.org.uk

breast
cancer
care

