

EVERY **your prescription for healthy living**

# WOMAN

## Teri HATCHER

"life's journeys  
have added  
to my sensuality"

## sister POWER

SISTERS FIGHTING  
THE BATTLE AGAINST  
BREAST CANCER

## 7 DIET MYTHS BUSTED

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THE ULTIMATE  
GUIDE TO THE  
PERFECT BRA

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A woman's relationship with her bra is no simple thing. Just think back to fifth grade and the time Billy (or Jimmy or David—every fifth-grade class had a bra snapper) grabbed your training-bra strap, gave it a thwack, and announced, "Guess who got an over-the-shoulder boulder-holder?" A lovely introduction to the world of lingerie, and the start of a love-hate relationship. True, a bra makes clothes fit better, but it's a nuisance on a hot day. A sports bra allows us to go for a flop-free jog, but it flattens us like a pancake, creating that coveted "uni-boob" look. And then there's the eternal question: Why is it so hard to find a bra that fits?

## DON'T GO IT ALONE

Many of us wander the lingerie aisles without knowing the best bra style for our figure, or even our true bra size. "Too many women don't take the time to work with a professional bra fitter," says Lisa Cole, author of *Lingerie: The Foundation of a Woman's Life* and president of AskLisaCole.com, dedicated to lingerie fit and fashion. "I've seen women spend thousands of dollars on the wrong size and style of lingerie," says Cole, who frequently hosts lingerie clinics for women's groups. A professional fitting is free, and most major department stores have fitters. Schedule an appointment to ensure you have enough uninterrupted time with your professional bra-tender. "Your clothes will fit better and your self confidence will get a boost," adds Cole.

*Don't assume that once you're fitted, that's it. You should plan on a yearly visit to be refitted," Brooks suggests. Our bodies change due to hormonal fluctuations, weight changes, and simply the effects of time.*

## GETTING THE RIGHT FIT

Like Lisa Cole, the folks at Victoria's Secret ([victoriasecret.com](http://victoriasecret.com)) recommend a professional fitting to get the best fit. But you can do it yourself with their instructions, below. Measure yourself wearing an unlined or lightly lined bra. And remember that you may still need to try on bras in several sizes and styles to get the best fit.



**1. Measure your band size.** Using a soft tape measure, measure around the rib cage directly under the bust. The tape should rest on the lower band of your bra. Be sure the tape is snug, smooth across the back, and that the back is level with the front. Add 5 inches to this measurement to get your band size. Example: If your rib-cage measures 29 inches, adding 5 inches gives you a 34-inch band size. If the resulting band size is an odd number, you can usually go to the next higher even-numbered band size, but you may also want to try the next lower even-numbered band size.



**2. Measure your cup size.** Measure completely around the bust at the fullest point, holding the tape measure straight but not tight. The difference between this measurement and your band size is your cup size. Each inch of difference is equal to one cup size on the chart below. Example: If your band size is 34 inches and your bust measurement is 35 inches, you wear an A cup.

Less than 1 inch = AA cup  
1 inch = A cup  
2 inches = B cup  
3 inches = C cup  
4 inches = D cup  
5 inches = DD cup

**3. Use the "visual fit" technique.** "Make sure all the breast tissue is in the cup," says Lisa Cole. "You don't want a 'mountaintop' experience!" If you're a smaller cup size, make sure there's no gapping in the cup. To find your correct fit, take your current band size and cup size and adjust both of them up or down as needed, says Cole. For example: If you're wearing a 36C and spilling out of the cup, but the band is fine, try a 36D. If you're wearing a 36C and the cup is fine, but you're straining to hook the bra on the last set of hooks, or the band is riding up too high on your back, try a 38C.



We've all done it—thrown our bras in the washing machine and (even worse) in the dryer. But in an era of drive-thru Starbucks, who has time to hand-wash their dainties? Well, have you priced a good bra lately? Taking the time to care for your bras means they'll continue to do their supportive job a whole lot longer.

"Elastic in the fabric, straps, and back is the magical component in bras that fights gravity," says Christi Andersen, CEO of Zyrra, a custom-bra company (zyrra.com). "Just like certain body parts, elastic stretches and droops with age," she adds. "Heat speeds up this process by breaking down the elastic fibers. So washing machines and hot water are a big no-no."

Andersen suggests hand washing bras in cold water for 10 minutes. And skip the dryer. "The dryer is your bra's biggest enemy," she says. So hang bras to dry or dry them flat. Giving them a day to recover between wearings will extend their life too. "It gives the elastic time to recover its original shape after being stretched around your body," says Andersen.

With proper care, a bra should last for a year or longer. "Discard a bra when it begins to stretch out in the back, when it puckers in the cup, or when the underwire does not feel comfortable after a few hours," Cole suggests.

*Look slimmer—instantly. A band that rides up in back can create the appearance of "back fat," says Brooks. If the band fits low and straight across the back, the whole back appears slimmer, she says. You should be able to hook the bra in the middle position comfortably.*

#### GETTING WIRED

To wire or not to underwire? Some women simply hate the feeling of an underwire bra pushing against the rib cage. The secret to wearing one comfortably, says Cole, is getting the proper fit. "Underwire bras truly help to define a woman's natural curves," she says. "You will certainly get a better fit and shape in a underwire bra." But non-underwire bras have improved over the years, she adds, and many now provide good support.

While we're on the subject of underwires, let's put to bed an urban myth. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), an e-mail has been circulating that states that underwire bras compact your lymphatic system near the breast, causing breast cancer. "There are no scientifically valid studies that show a correlation between wearing bras of any type and the occurrence of breast cancer," say experts at the ACS.



## FROM WHALEBONE TO LYCRA



While we may gripe occasionally about the hassles of fitting, buying, and washing our bras, we're lucky to be living in 2006. Until 1913, women were corset-bound. We're talking whalebone and steel rods. But when New York City socialite Mary Phelps Jacob brought home a slinky dress to wear to a party, the whalebone in her corset poked out above the plunging neckline, according to **American Heritage of Invention & Technology** magazine. With two silk handkerchiefs, some pink ribbon, and what had to be a fair amount of moxie at the time, she created the first backless bra. Here's to you, Mary!

*Both regular and mastectomy bras should fit snugly against the body, and the band should lie low on the back to help keep the weight from being carried by the shoulder straps, says Susan Brooks. If you have grooves carved into the top of your shoulders, you know the straps have been carrying too much of the load.*

## BRAS GO HIGH-TECH

Mention "high-tech bras," and Madonna's Jean-Paul Gaultier-designed cone bra, created for her 1990 *Blonde Ambition* tour, leaps to mind. (The mother in me wants to warn, "You'll put someone's eye out with that thing!") But on a more practical note, today's bra manufacturers are going the techie route with designs that will keep women warm, cool, and "enhanced" in unique ways. One will even track your heartbeat!

**The bra that does more than just "cross your heart."** The NuMetrex Heart Rate Monitor Sports Bra ([numetrex.com](http://numetrex.com)) gives women the option of wearing a wireless heart-rate monitor. The bra contains sensors that work with a watch that displays the wearer's heartbeat. It also connects with most fitness machines that have integrated monitoring devices, such as spinning bikes and elliptical trainers.

**The bra that's hot—and cool.** Wacoal, a Japanese lingerie manufacturer, just might take the prize for pushing the cutting-edge-bra envelope. Their Kaiteki Navi bra contains polymers that help regulate the skin's temperature. When things heat up, the polymers melt and turn liquid, absorbing heat and keeping the body cool. When temperatures drop, the polymers solidify and release heat.

**The padded bra—done right.** The Ipex bra, by Victoria's Secret ([victoriasecret.com](http://victoriasecret.com)), is made with a fusing process that allows for gradual feathering, or shaving, of multiple layers of material, providing maximum coverage at the center and practically no padding at the edges, for a more natural yet definitely enhanced look. It's a far cry from traditional padded bras.





## CHOOSING A SPORTS BRA

Sports bras help reduce bouncing and jiggling during exercise. "I've seen women get lumps and rashes from not being properly supported," says Cole. "And today's sports bras are designed to complement the look of your other work-out wear," she adds. Compression-style bras are the original pull-overs that have no individual cups. They press the breasts against the chest to minimize movement and offer the most "bounce" control. They're best suited for smaller cup sizes and for lower-impact activities. Encapsulation-style sports bras have separate cups that support the breasts individually. They get extra support from an underwire and a firm chest band. They're recommended for larger cup sizes and higher-impact activities.



## CHOOSING A MASTECTOMY BRA

A mastectomy bra is designed like a regular bra but with stretch pockets inside the cups to accommodate prostheses (breast forms). The prosthesis slides into the pocket and provides shape and support. There are different types of post-mastectomy prostheses; the type a woman needs is determined by the amount of breast tissue that has been removed. Mastectomy bras and prostheses are often covered by medical insurance.

Mastectomy bras are usually purchased at a specialty shop, where a certified mastectomy-bra fitter can assist you in selecting the appropriate prosthesis and bra. Some of these shops also sew pockets into regular bras and swimsuits. "It's best if a woman can schedule an appointment with a mastectomy-bra fitter before her surgery, so she's aware of her options," says Susan Brooks, a certified mastectomy-bra fitter and owner of Women's Health Boutique in

Torrance, California. After her incision has healed, the woman can return for a fitting. It's not unusual for a woman to feel apprehensive when being fitted for a mastectomy bra, says Brooks. After all, she's recently received a cancer diagnosis, gone through surgery and, in many cases, endured radiation or chemotherapy. Following a mastectomy, some women worry about losing their femininity. "Many women come in fearing they're going to be stuck with an ugly, pointy, old-lady mastectomy bra," says Brooks. But mastectomy bras can be as sexy as anything from Victoria's Secret, she says.

Because most women have gone without a bra of any kind during the weeks of healing following surgery, visiting a boutique-style store that specializes in mastectomy bras can give a woman a real psychological boost, says Brooks. "It makes her realize she can still look and feel feminine."

## A brief history of the bra

2500 B.C.: Female warriors on the isle of Crete wear a corset-like garment with openings for the chest that push the naked breasts upward and outward.

450 B.C.: To de-emphasize their bust, Roman women don garments that conceal or stunt their breasts.

4th century: Women dress less restrictively, wearing tunic-like linen "chemises" with round or square necklines, long sleeves, and wrist ruffles.

13th century: The advent of the bra. Shop windows publicly advertise garments that "contain the larger one, support the weak, and gather the floppy."

1550s: Catherine de Medici bans "thick waists" at court and women throughout Europe subject themselves to the agony of steel-rod and whalebone corsets, sometimes reducing their waist to less than 10 inches around!

1860: Corsets and "corset training" become popular again. Women's waists are minimized to such an extent that their internal organs and ribs become deformed.

1889 to 1893: The two-piece *bien-être* ("well-being," in French)—a corset-bra hybrid—is invented by Herminie Cadolle. Unlike the traditional corset, it supports the breasts from the shoulders rather than pushing them up from the waist. But Marie Tucek's Breast Supporter of 1893, with a separate pocket for each breast, straps that pass over the shoulders, and hook-and-eye fasteners, is more popular, and the bra as we know it is born.

1913: Socialite Mary Phelps Jacob designs a backless bra from two handkerchiefs, ribbon, and cord. The design is so popular that Jacob applies for a patent for the "Caresse Crosby," Warner Brothers Corset Company buys her idea for \$1,500 and rakes in more than \$15 million in profits from her innovation.

1914 to 1918: Men go to war, women go to work, and it's good-bye, corsets. They're cumbersome under factory uniforms, and the U.S. War Industries Board asks women to give them up to reduce the nonmilitary consumption of metal. The slowdown in sales saves 28,000 tons of metal—enough to build two plus-size battleships.

1920s: Warner introduces a chest-flattening bra in response to the boyish flapper look. In 1928, Russian immigrant Ida Rosenthal rebels by creating bras with cup sizes and bras for different phases of life.

1930s: The French word *brassière* gets shortened to **bra**. Warner patents the first successful all-elastic bra as the natural, unrestricted female shape becomes acceptable. At the same time, the "sweater girl" look with rigid, pointy cups (à la Lana Turner) becomes popular.

1960s: Feminists burn their bras while protesting the 1968 Miss America pageant. The gesture doesn't stop Gossard from releasing the Wonderbra the same year.

1980s: Thanks to the Material Girl, underwear becomes outerwear, and brash, sexy bras fly off the shelves of Victoria's Secret and Frederick's of Hollywood.

2000s to the present: The American waistline and bust size expands. The average bust size in 2004 is reported to be 34D, compared to the 32B of 30 years ago.