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Got Breasts? Questions?

Go on, admit it: At some point or another, you've looked down and wondered, Why aren't my breasts rounder? Perkier? Even, yes, larger? Breasts have come to symbolize femininity, so it's no wonder most of us want something bigger or better. American women's chests, in fact, *are* getting bigger: These days, the top-selling bra size is 36C, up from 34B just over 10 years ago. Experts suspect the growth spurt is because, as a nation, we're growing heavier—leaving us broader across the back and making our cups runneth over too. (About a third of your typical breast is plain old fat, which is why gaining weight, or losing it, affects you up front.) Just as your feet aren't exactly the same size, your breasts probably aren't a perfectly matched set either. Experts say it's not uncommon to have as much as a one-cup-size variation between them.

And what about those other common questions: What if my breasts hurt? Should I worry about nipple hair? Is it true that I'm probably wearing the wrong bra? (Yes—but more about that in a moment.) Here's *Glamour's* totally supportive guide.

Your breasts at 20, 30, 40...and beyond

What's really going on as you age? Take a look.

At 20 At puberty, the hormones estrogen and progesterone trigger the growth of milk ducts, milk-producing lobules and a cushiony layer of fat. In your teens and twenties, your milk-making machinery continues to develop, sometimes causing a fibroadenoma—a firm, round lump inside the breast. And you can thank estrogen and progesterone for your sag-free shapeliness. They stimulate the growth of connective tissue, or collagen, that keeps you from drooping.

At 30 Around this age, women often develop fibrocystic breasts, an occasionally painful lumpiness. Usually, these lumps are harmless and disappear on their own after your period. (If they don't, have them checked by a doctor.) If you're pregnant, you may gain about a cup size. Some women swear the boost is permanent, but most recede back to their previous size, says New York City plastic surgeon Tracy M. Pfeifer, M.D. In fact, if you've had kids, you may not be as perky as someone who hasn't, since weight gain during pregnancy can stretch the ligaments that help support the breasts.

At 40 and beyond As you age, fat replaces your breasts' milk-making infrastructure, making them softer and, alas, more likely to droop. (The good news: This higher fat ratio makes it easier for mammograms to detect breast cancer.) You're more likely to develop benign cysts, fluid-filled sacs that are usually harmless. To be safe, have these and any abnormalities checked by a doctor. After menopause, estrogen levels fall and the collagen in your breasts loses more elasticity. The best way to reduce sag? Wear a supportive bra.

Your breast future

