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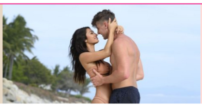
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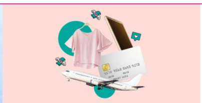
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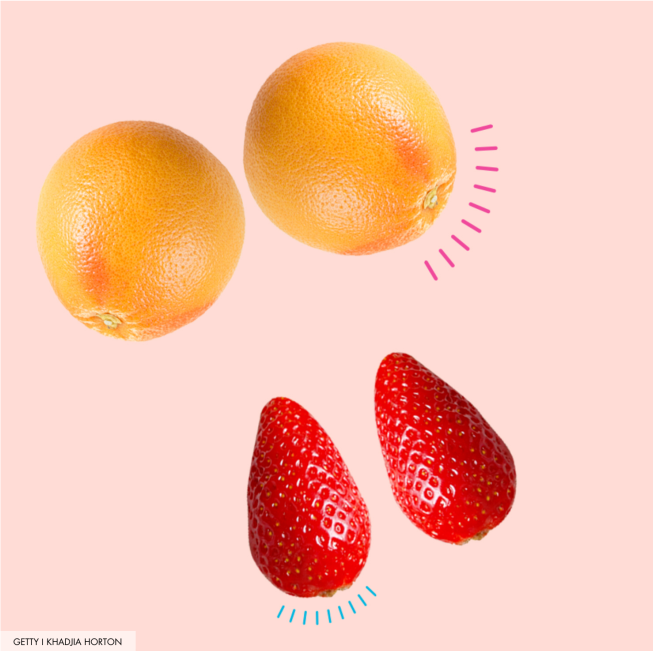
Knowing Which Breast Shape You Have Will Solve All Your Bra Problems

Size doesn't matter. But shape? Shape is CRUCIAL.

by HANNAH SMOTHERS and CARINA HSIEH JAN 7, 2020


GETTY I KHADJIA HORTON

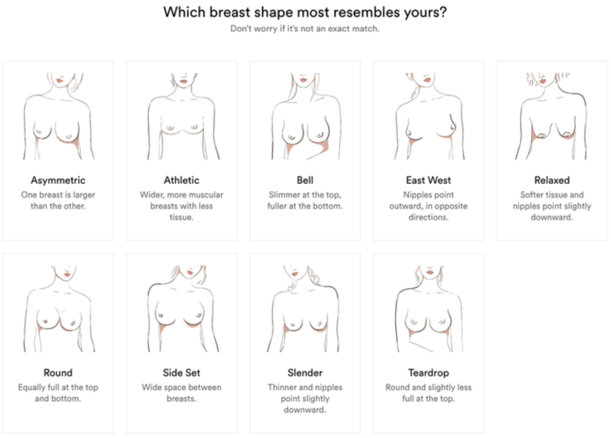
When it comes to boobs, no two are the same—not even the two on your own chest. Boobs come in as many (or maybe more) shapes and sizes as snowflakes, and with the exception of any lumps and bumps that might signal a potential health problem, all those shapes and sizes are normal and healthy. But knowing your general breast shape can be a huge help in finding a good-fitting, supportive bra that's as comfortable as possible.

Did you even KNOW there was such a thing as "boob types?"

YES, DUH!

NO, HELP ME.

While it's common knowledge that the larger your breasts, the higher your chances of back strain, shape can also have an effect on strain, explains Adam Kolker, MD, a double-board certified Manhattan plastic surgeon. Let's say you have two similarly sized breasts, but the shape varies. If one set is firm, high, and perky, and the other set sits lower on the chest and abdomen and droops, the lower-sitting breast will exert more strain on the back, shoulders, and neck, says Dr. Kolker. "Consider holding a two-pound weight high on your chest and close to your body or holding that weight further forward and lower—you will have a much more difficult time holding that weight in the latter position," Dr. Kolker says.



Which breast shape most resembles yours?

Don't worry if it's not an exact match.

Asymmetric One breast is larger than the other.

Athletic Wider, more muscular breasts with less tissue.

Bell Slimmer at the top, fuller at the bottom.

East West Nipples point outward, in opposite directions.

Relaxed Softer tissue and nipples point slightly downward.

Round Equally full at the top and bottom.

Side Set Wide space between breasts.

Slender Thinner and nipples point slightly downward.

Teardrop Round and slightly less full at the top.

ThirdLove's breast shape dictionary

TRUELOVE.COM

That's why knowing which type your own breasts are most similar to can make a huge difference in how you shop for bras. ThirdLove, the undies company you've probably seen all over Insta, is especially known for its super-specific sizes. Ra'el Cohen, ThirdLoves's chief creative officer, says the brand has more than 70. But more important than band and cup size, Cohen adds, is finding the bra shape that best corresponds to your boob size.

Did you see *your* boob shape on that chart?

YES!

NOT REALLY :/

Cohen has been in the bra industry for 20 years and a lot of that time was spent working with women to fit bras. She says ThirdLove's Fit Finder is a culmination of everything she learned "from thousands of in-person fittings." The Fit Finder essentially tries to replicate the experience you'd have if you went to a fancy bra store and had a proper fitting—it asks for things like your height, your normal bra size and brand, and how well your everyday bra fits you. But the *pièce de résistance* is the part where you have to identify your own boob shape from an illustrated selection of nine common types.

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There Are 11 Types of Nipples

ThirdLove's breast-shape dictionary, as Cohen calls it, is far from all-inclusive. But most people can find a type that looks *most* similar to their own, and that makes a key difference in what style bra works best for them. **Tubular breasts, are another kind of commonly seen breast shape** that isn't on the chart currently and should be, adds Dr. Kolker.

The main difference between the types are where your boobs carry the bulk of their tissue—up high, out toward the side, down low, or a mixture of all those things. **No one type is better than another**, and don't get too attached to whatever yours look like now. Cohen says that most people change bra sizes and styles about six times over the course of their lives, as your body changes and you experience things like pregnancy and breastfeeding (or not).

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11 Mothers on What Breastfeeding Really Feels Like

"When women are young, their breasts tend to be higher and perkier, with their nipple-areola complex closer to the center of their breast," explains Constance Chen, MD, board-certified plastic surgeon and clinical assistant professor of plastic surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College. "As women age, gravity pulls down on their breast tissue. In particular, after pregnancy, the breasts engorge with milk and grow large and then involute after breastfeeding." she adds. Sometimes, the breast skin that has stretched out lacks the elasticity to snap back after pregnancy, which can change the appearance of the breasts. And regardless of pregnancy, **with age, "breasts tend to become less fibrous and fattier, which can also lead to softer and sometimes droopier breasts,"** explains Dr. Chen.

Larger, round, or teardrop-shaped breasts that might experience more back pain are best suited with a more supportive style like ThirdLove's 24/7 Perfect Coverage Bra, says Cohen, as this one has a wider band and padded straps. For anyone with asymmetric boobs, Cohen recommends the 24/7 Classic Contour Plunge, as it provides support *and* lift to equal out your breasts. You want to find a bra that fits you, instead of your trying to fit into whatever bra shape and size in front of you at a random store.

THIRDLOVE

24/7™ Perfect Coverage Bra, $68

THIRD LOVE
thirdlove.com

SHOP NOW

And knowing your boob shape doesn't *just* help when it comes to bra fitting. Knowing your breast shape can also help if you choose to breastfeed. "Small side-set boobs, which can also be referred to as 'hypoplastic breasts' or 'tubular breasts' can also make it more challenging to breastfeed," adds Allena Rissa, founder and editor of The Better Fit. These breasts are set further apart and contain less breast tissue than other breast shapes. Knowing that you might have a trickier time breastfeeding ahead of time means you can do more research on breastfeeding alternatives or look into booking a nursing coach earlier, just in case.

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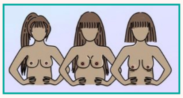

How Your Boobs Change Over Your Lifetime

“People get caught up on size a lot, and part of what we try to do as a brand is educate them that, **yes, size is important, but it should change** and will change as you go through different life changes like having a baby or losing and gaining weight,” Cohen says.

THIRDLOVE

24/7™ Classic Contour Plunge Bra, $68

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Cohen says **it’s helpful to think about bra shopping the same way you think about jeans shopping: Everyone’s butt and thighs are different, which is why not all jeans are cut the exact same way**. The same goes for your boobs—everyone carries the fullest part of their breasts in a different place, which is why multiple bra shapes exist and why you should make use of them.

If you’re lucky enough to live in a city with a specialized bra shop with expert fitters (like New York), get ye into the shop and **have your own fitting—that’s the most precise way to learn your own boob shape and what sort of bra works best for you**. But otherwise, Cohen says the Fit Finder is the closest online approximation to the IRL experience. And only good things can come from getting to know the gals (are people still saying this?) even better.

Related Story

Your Boobs Will Love This: The Bra Awards

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CARINA HSIEH **sex & relationships editor**
Carina Hsieh lives in NYC with her French Bulldog Bao Bao — follow her on Instagram and Twitter • Candace Bushnell once called her the Samantha Jones of Tinder • She enjoys hanging out in the candle aisle of TJ Maxx and getting lost in Amazon spirals.