



Women such as Tameka Toney of Atlanta should consider buying a bra from an expert fitter to ensure a proper fit.

Jenni Gorman / Our News Service

Chances are, you're among the 80 percent wearing the wrong size

By CHRISTY L. BREITHAUPT
Special to The Detroit News

There she is — that well-dressed woman walking down the street doing the brassiere shimmy.

She is among thousands of women who tug and pull at their bra straps; women who struggle to keep a strapless bra in place; women who strain to keep the upper-half of their body motionless.

The problem? These women most likely are wearing the wrong bra. In fact, bras are items women should consider buying from an expert fitter, considering research that indicates nearly 80 percent of U.S. women are wearing the wrong size.

The size myth

Why are women wearing the wrong size?

Many don't realize not all cup sizes are made equal, says Rebecca Aughton, owner of Bra-vo Intimates in Royal Oak.

Cup sizes actually fluctuate depending on the band size. Contrary to popular belief, bras do not just go up to a DD. Bra-vo Intimates carries them up to size KK, and Harp's Lingerie in Birmingham goes up to an L.

The idea is to get the perfect cup and perfect band size to go with each woman's individual needs. For that to happen, you need a wider range of sizes than



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Rebecca Aughton, right, owner of Bra-vo Intimates in Royal Oak, shows the proper way to fit a bra with Ashley Mercurio of Dearborn.

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ELIZABETH HARP
owner of Harp's Lingerie

just the 32A to 38DD you find in a department store.

"Everybody has a different size," says Elizabeth Harp, owner of Harp's Lingerie, who's been selling bras for more than 50 years. "You won't get two women who are alike."

Nor will you get two manufacturers that create bra sizes in the same way. If you measure to a 34B, that doesn't mean you'll be a 34B in every brand. The sizing is more comparable to jeans, which fluctuate by designer, than shoes, which are typically standard.

Proper fit counts

It's in your best interest to be fitted properly for a bra, both Aughton and Harp maintain. Well-fitted brassieres will provide comfort and will lift breasts and push them forward, creating a slimmer silhouette.

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What a fitting does for you

Getting fitted for the proper bra size can help you in a myriad of ways:

- A bra that fits correctly will not sag or ride up, which is what causes wear and tear on your straps.
- A good bra will lift and support you, making your clothes look well-fitted. A good way to judge this is to wear a shirt with darts near your chest. Your breasts and the darts should be on the same level if your bra fits well.
- You can prevent pain and sagging.
- Sports bras should be as well-fitted as your everyday bra. A good sports bra should be tight enough to keep you from jiggling around, but not uncomfortable.
- You might save money on underthings in the long-run. By investing in items that fit well, you'll be more apt to take care of them, which will make them last longer.

— Christy L. Breithaupt

Bra

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"You'll look better — that's the whole idea," Aughton says. "In our grandmother's age, they called it the foundation because it's the foundation on which you put everything else."

"Invest in a good bra."

A well-fitting bra can get rid of the dreaded "button-up shirt gap," where the second button on your favorite work shirt just won't stay closed.

"See how some blouses open up — the bra is too tight," Harp says. "I hate a blouse to gap."

Worth the hefty price?

With the economy in a slump, it might be hard to believe that investing in a good bra is really well-spent cash. However, the benefits greatly outweigh the very slight cost increase.

Here are a few things to consider, Aughton and Harp say:

■ Bras at a specialty store will run anywhere from \$35 to \$150.

■ A bra is something you wear daily, so it really is an investment. In Europe, Aughton says, women treasure their undergarments because they consider them a necessity.

■ A good bra will most likely be a higher-quality bra that will last longer. Also, because you made the investment, you're more likely to take good care of the bra.

■ Do not throw fine washables in the washing machine. You should soak them in a special detergent (available at lingerie shops), then let them hang dry.

"Use common sense," Harp says.

"I paid \$100 for this bra. Should I throw it in the washing machine? No. Take care of your pretty things."

Bras for different needs

A woman's wardrobe should have four separate bras: everyday, knits, sports and strapless.

Women should own a seamless bra to be worn with T-shirts, along with a seamed bra to wear with just about everything else. A seamed bra helps direct breasts up and forward, maximizing your figure potential. If you don't mind the lines, you can also wear this bra with knits, Aughton says.

If you do any kind of exercise,



(Bradley A. Bennett) Special to The Detroit News

Dearborn resident Ashley Mercurio's shirt is smooth after being fitted properly for a bra at Bra-vo Intimates in Royal Oak.

Where to get fitted

Here are a few stores in Metro Detroit that offer bra fittings:

Bra-vo Intimates

517 S. Washington Ave., Royal Oak
(248) 58-BRAVO (2-7266)

What about other undies?

Specialty lingerie stores aren't just helpful for bra fittings. They can also help you with a multitude of other foundation garment issues — and there's no need to be shy — these women have heard everything. Here are some other things Elizabeth Harp and Rebecca Aughton suggest checking out at a lingerie store.

G-strings: If you're new to this phenomenon, Aughton is more than happy to explain the less-is-more look. She says you should always go up a size, and stay away from lace if it's your first time out.

Body shapewear: Do not call these girdles anymore. What used to be painful and depressing is now, thanks to modern fabric technology, only slightly uncomfortable. Shapewear comes in all different brands and can suck in your tummy, hold your butt a bit tighter or cinch your waist.

Basic underwear: There's underwear to hold you in, lift you up or decrease visible panty lines — the key is to also get it to be comfortable.

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you should also own a sports bra. A sports bra should really keep your breasts from moving at all. Need more incentive? A properly fitted sports bra can help decrease sagging in your later years.

Finally, you need a strapless bra. Now, before you start moaning and

gripping about the rigors of wearing one, you should know that women up to a G-cup can wear one. The key, Aughton says, is to find the right size.

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