Hi,

I recently purchased some push up bras. However, when I wear one, it starts to feel kind of weird. I'm not sure how to explain the feeling but it almost feels tight on my bust. I can really feel the wire. Are push-up bras supposed to feel that way? Am I wearing the wrong size? I don't think I'm wearing the wrong size; if I wore a regular bra in that size, it's okay.

Answer
Dear Reader,

You are certainly not alone in your quandary. Did you know that about 70% of women wear the wrong bra size? And that might be an underestimation: a study published in the British Journal of Plastic Surgery [2] found that 100% of the women surveyed were wearing the wrong size. In an interesting little display of psychology, every one of those women but one underestimated their back measurement by an average of four inches, and overestimated their cup size by an average of three. Learning how to find your true size, and a perfect fit, can save you years of uncomfortable wires and tightness in the chest.

The organization Her Room [3], provides an article online that offers step-by-step instructions [4] on how to determine your cup size at home [4]. If you’re not the do-it-yourself type, most lingerie stores or upscale department stores employ staff experts in sizing and fitting bras.

Here are some tips you can take bra-shopping with you:

- Bras tend to stretch in back, so when you buy a new one, make sure it fits snugly when hooked on the loosest rung.
- The center of your bra (the part between the cups) should lie flat on your chest
- If your breasts overflow out of the cups, or if any part of your bra leaves marks or lines on your skin after a day’s wear, it is too tight.
- If you feel the wire from an underwire poking you, the bra is too small.

In addition to looking better on your body and under your clothes, a properly fitting bra can reduce posture- and exercise-related breast pain. Your bra, whether push-up or otherwise, should be supportive for your bust and back and comfortable enough that you can mostly forget about it. In order to eliminate the too-tight, wire-pressing feeling, it might be a good idea to double-check your bra size, either at home or at a store. If you think your current size might be off, buy yourself a bra that gives you the support without the squeeze.

Alice!

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