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spotlight

# How Uplifting!

Finding a properly fitting bra is a load off your shoulders.

**Amy Landsman**  
Special to the Jewish Times

**"E**verybody thinks they're a 36C," chuckled the clerk at a local lingerie shop.

Big, small and in-between, the clerk has seen them all, and knows full well that bras are definitely not a one-size-fits-all proposition. In fact, even if you really were once a perfect 36C, you're probably not anymore.

That's because breast size changes during a woman's life. Your monthly cycle, those extra 10 pounds, pregnancy, nursing, menopause or exercise can all play a part in whether you've gone up or down a size or two.

"Nine times out of 10 they are wearing the wrong size," says sales clerk Dorothy Stocksdales of Lingerie Lingerie at The Shops at Kenilworth in Towson.

Think about it; since sizes range from 32AA to 44G, the right size for you has got to be out there somewhere.

Bra size is determined both by cup and the size of your rib cage. Manufacturers — and there are dozens of them — all size their bras slightly differently. So you may very well be that perfect 36C in a bra by one maker, but something different in another.

"Not all cups are created equal," says Lingerie Lingerie owner Barbara Bianco. "It's not rocket science, but there is a lot to it."

In a well-fitting bra, the band and straps work together to keep you lifted, and you should feel comfortable all day.

"Some bras take the pressure off your shoulders," says Lynn Fram,

co-owner of Bare Necessities at Green Spring Station in Lutherville. "You look perky rather than saggy."

How do you know it's time for a new bra?

"When you're not comfortable, or you're stretched out, or you see the pretty one in the window," then it's time, says clerk Beverly Lutters of Lingerie Lingerie.

"We also tell people you should have five to seven bras in your wardrobe. They would usually last nine to 12 months with rotating them regularly," notes Ms. Fram.

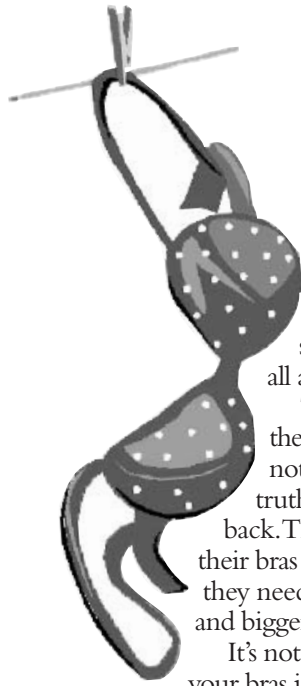
"It depends how many you have, how you take care of them. If you have two bras, that will last you maybe six months. If you have six or eight they'll last you a little longer, then they'll all go at the same time!" observes Cookie Rosenberg, owner of We Fit in Pikesville, who has 40 years of experience fitting ladies of every shape and size imaginable.

Using a tape measure, you can size yourself. (The Web site [onehanceplace](http://onehanceplace.com) has a handy fitting guide.) But for the most accurate results it's really best to have someone else do the measuring.

"Most women are OK with being fitted," observes Ms. Fram.

Lingerie Lingerie owner Ms. Bianco says the biggest mistake ladies make when they try to self-fit is buying too big in the band and too small in the cup.

"The worst thing you can do is have a band that's too big around. Then it tends to ride up in the back. It sags in the front. The fit is terrible,



the look is terrible," Ms. Bianco says. "You want your bra to fit low and snug. It should fit parallel all around."

The ladies "always say they're bigger in the cup," notes Ms. Rosenberg. "The truth is they are bigger in the back. Then they wonder why their bras are riding up. It's because they need to go smaller in the back, and bigger in the front."

It's not a criminal offense to toss your bras in the washing machine. Just be sure to use a lingerie bag, wash on the delicate cycle, and never use the dryer.

"You get more mileage out of them" that way, notes Ms. Fram.

Like fashion in general, bra styles change with the times. Colorful, lacy bras were all the rage back in the 1980s when fashion tended toward shoulder pads and big sweaters.

Today, the look is more form-fitted. Pointy bras have given way to a smoother look, observes Ms. Rosenberg.

Nude is in. White out. (Don't wear a white bra under a white shirt. It'll show.) A black bra is also a wardrobe staple.

Molded bras, which uplift and hide your nipples without changing your cup size, are also popular these days. A padded bra gives you push-up. Underwire provides support.

"If you wear a lot of T-shirts or tight sweaters, I want to get you something that's smooth and uplifting and that hides nipples if that's an issue. If you wear tank tops then you want to do a racer back bra," says Ms. Fram. If you like shirts with skinny straps, you may want a strapless bra. Brides-to-be will need a specialty bra designed to give shape under a heavy dress.

Some women are bigger on one side than the other, and a good lingerie shop will do alterations. Wider straps for full-figured women are available these days. And many

bras are also tag free, so there's nothing scratchy under your shirt. You can also buy bra accessories, such as holders to keep your straps in place or gizmos to hide your nipples.

If you are pregnant or nursing you will definitely need a new bra. Many nursing moms also need a bra to sleep in.

"We have about nine different style bras and we go up to a size G, which is very rare," says Shirah Talles, owner of Tummies Maternity in Pikesville. "Most of our bras are adjustable so any given day you can adjust your bra up a cup size or down a cup size because when you're nursing your body is changing, you're fuller on some days than others. They're also one-handed friendly so if you're holding your screaming baby in one hand you can unhook the bra with the other!"

Think nursing bras are built strictly for function, not fun? Ms. Talles points out that while she certainly carries traditional styles, she has sexy Elle Macpherson models in stock as well.

Buying a trainer bra is a rite of passage for pre-teen girls. Bare Necessities co-owner Mindi Leikin says about half the girls are very shy and the other half are perfectly comfortable in the dressing room. "We try to work with them and put them at ease," Ms. Leikin says. Generally the moms stay outside during the fitting. The saleswoman gives the girl a loaner T-shirt and then calls mom in to see how it looks. After 22 years in the business, Ms. Leikin says she now has adult customers she fitted for their first bras when they were girls.

So even if you're not that perfect 36C, take heart. Few women are. But whatever your size, the bra that makes you look and feel your best is certainly out there somewhere. □

Barbara Bianco (right) does a fitting in her store Lingerie Lingerie.



PHOTO: REBECCA GARDNER

### Fit To Be Sized

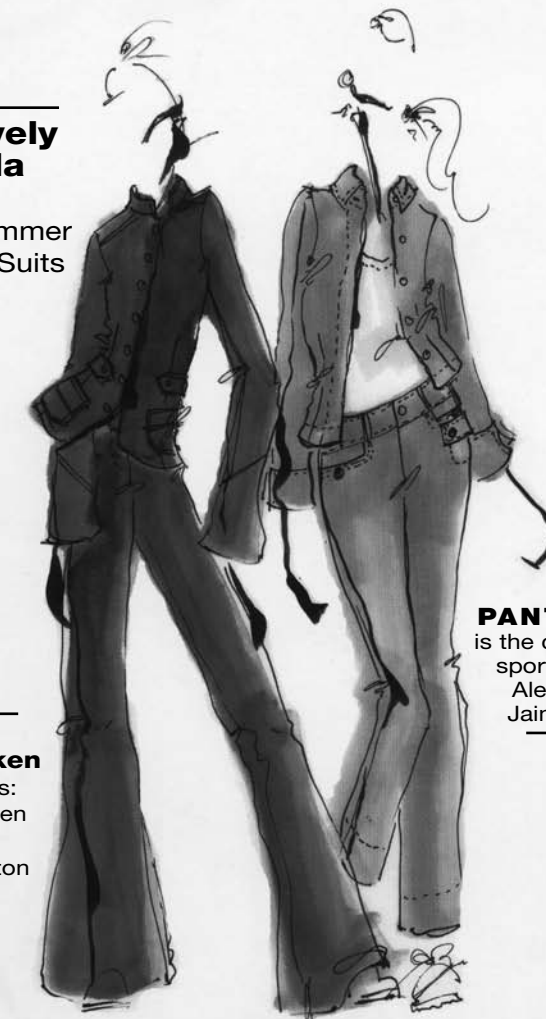
Bras are always available at department and discount stores, but if you want to be fitted, check out:  
Lingerie Lingerie, 410-296-8808, [lingerie lingerie shop.com](http://lingerie lingerie shop.com)  
Bare Necessities, 410-583-1383, [necessarysecrets.com](http://necessarysecrets.com)  
We Fit, 410-484-1022  
Tummies Maternity, 410-602-5388, [tummiesmaternity.com](http://tummiesmaternity.com)

Amy Landsman is a free-lance writer who in the course of writing this article ended up tossing out over half the bras in her dresser.

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