

Service: Breast Reconstruction

Nipple Areolar Micro-Pigmentation (Tattooing)



Following breast and nipple reconstruction surgery, colour can be added to create a natural looking areola to your new breast(s).

Areola micro-pigmentation, commonly called tattooing, is a nurse-led service available at Southmead Hospital. The nurses are fully trained in micro-pigmentation techniques.

The procedure creates a semi-permanent image (tattoo) of an areola and nipple for women who have undergone breast reconstruction.

Once you have agreed with your consultant that you would like to have this treatment, you will be sent an appointment.

Benefits

The aim is to improve the cosmetic appearance of the breast by creating as closely as possible a nipple/areola colour that matches the existing nipple, if present. This may have a positive effect on improving body image and boosting self-esteem.

Risks

As this is an invasive procedure, micro-pigmentation is not without risks.

These are:

- Not achieving an exact colour match
- Scarring
- Uneven pigment colour
- Slight skin irritation or allergy to pigment
- Infection
- Fading of pigment

What factors may affect the results?

The result of pigment implantation is partially determined by variations in skin type and can be affected by:

- Medication
- Natural skin overtones
- Skin characteristics (dryness, oiliness, sun damage, thickness, colour, acidity)
- Lifestyle such as alcohol intake or smoking
- Individual healing ability

If you have any questions please contact one of the Breast Reconstruction Nurse on the contact details overleaf.

The procedure

As this is a procedure, you will be asked to sign a consent form, to ensure full understanding is met.

All equipment used is sterile. Disposable needles are used for each individual procedure and disposed of immediately.

During your consultation you will be involved in determining the area of breast to be treated and pigment colour matching. Topical local anaesthetic will be applied to the area and therefore this procedure should not be painful. However, you may feel vibration from the tattooing handset. The micro-pigmentation procedure usually takes 30-40 minutes depending on individual requirements.

The pigment is applied using a pen-like device, which works like a miniature sewing machine: the needles move up and down very fast, penetrating the skin implanting the coloured pigment to a depth of 2-3 millimetres. The nurse uses several techniques to build up colour effect.

Following the procedure a gauze dressing will be applied.

Most patients require 2-3 initial treatments 8-12 weeks apart to achieve the desired outcome.

You should be able to resume normal activities immediately following the procedure. However, the use of cosmetics, excessive perspiration and exposure of the treated area to the sun should be avoided until the area is fully healed.

Aftercare

Over the next 14 to 21 days your tattooed area will go through three stages of healing:

1. Heal:

The body's natural defences will create fine scabs to protect the area whilst healing.

2. Peel:

After a few days, when the tattooed area is healed, the scabs will fall off.

Do Not Pick off the scabs from the treated area as this will result in pigment loss.

3. Fade:

Once the scabs have finely healed and fallen off the tattooed area, you will see a lighter shade of the implanted colour. After 4/6 weeks the pigment in the tattoo will have settled and this will be the colour of your nipple and areola.

You may decide to have further tattooing to add more colour and this will be discussed at your follow up appointment with the breast reconstruction nurse.

What should you expect after the procedure?

The dressing, which is applied immediately after tattooing, should remain in place for at least a day as the areola area may continue bleeding.

This dressing should not be allowed to get wet as this may affect the result of the pigment colour.

After your treatment you may experience slight swelling and redness and your skin may feel 'tight'. We will discuss with you ways to ease discomfort, which may include taking over-the-counter paracetamol, however do not exceed the maximum dosage of 8 tablets in 24 hours. If you have any

concerns about pain please speak to one of the Breast Reconstruction Nurses.

These symptoms should subside within 1 to 7 days, depending on how sensitive your skin is.

Skin care instructions

The following instructions must be carefully followed for 14 days after your tattoo to ensure a successful result and to reduce the risk of infection.

- The next day you can have a shower or bath, however, do not use soap or soak the pigmented area with water. Keep the pigmented area clean and dry. Apply yellow soft paraffin/bepanthen ointment over the nipple and areola area and place gauzes in your bra to aid comfort.
- Do not sleep on your stomach.
- To prevent infection, try not to touch the pigmented area with your fingers until it is completely healed.

If you have any further questions please contact one of the Breast Reconstruction Nurse on the contact details overleaf. You will be given your next appointment for approximately 8-12 weeks after the initial treatment. The nurse will then assess the appearance of the areola and nipple and apply further pigment if necessary.

Allergy test

If you have a history of any type of allergy, it is advisable to have a skin patch test 24 hours prior to the procedure.

The purpose of this test is to detect allergies or other reactions to the topical anaesthetic and pigments used during the procedure.

At least 24 hours is required after the skin test to observe for allergy occurrence.

If you wish to have a patch test, please contact a member of the team on the number below.

If you have a latex allergy please let us know as soon as possible.

Failure to notify us of any skin sensitivities prior to treatment, could delay your tattooing being done.

If you have any questions, or require further information, please contact one of the nurses on the contact details overleaf.

**PATIENT
APPROVED** 

How to contact us:

Andrea Thompson waiting list coordinator



Email: Andrea.Thompson@nbt.nhs.uk



Phone number: 0117 41 47626

Plastic surgery Breast reconstruction team



Plasticsurgerybreastreconstructionteam@nbt.nhs.uk

Southmead Charitable Fund for breast reconstruction

Code 1009 for donations: Naila Hussain ext: 43679

Breast Reconstruction Nurse Practitioner: Caroline Oates



Email: caroline.oates@nbt.nhs.uk



Breast Reconstruction Nurse: Caroline Lewis

Tel: 0117 414 8700 or 0117 950 5050 bleep:1698



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If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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