

Areola Micropigmentation

Information for Patients

Following nipple reconstruction it is possible to tattoo semi-permanent colour onto your nipple and the surrounding skin in order to create a more realistic appearance. The tattoo colour is applied with a small electric machine, which holds needles that make tiny holes in the surface of the skin.

Will it hurt?

If you have had breast reconstruction surgery you will probably be numb in this area. If you do have any sensation, a local anaesthetic cream is usually successful in preventing any discomfort. Some patients may have feeling and although local topical anaesthetic, such as a numbing cream can be used, please be aware that this can distort the colour. Very occasionally, you may be advised to have some colour added to your untreated side if your own nipple and areola is very pale, as this can be difficult to match. In this case a local anaesthetic cream will be required. If you feel you will require a local anaesthetic then a longer appointment time needs to be allocated so please advise us of this as soon as possible.

When can it be done and how long will it take?

Tattooing can be undertaken once the wound has healed and most of the swelling subsided, usually around 3 months after the nipple reconstruction. The first visit will take approximately 1 hour. During this visit, the procedure will be fully explained to you and you will sign a consent form if you are happy to go ahead with it. The colours for the tattoo are also mixed to achieve the desired result.

Most patients will usually need a further 1 or 2 appointments to make sure they are happy with the result (although this can vary). These treatments should take less time than the first appointment.

The tattoo can sometimes fade with time and may require a touch up at a later date (this time is variable, but it is usually years later rather than months). A nurse who has undergone specialist training will perform the procedure.

Are there any risks or complications?

Infection

This is a potential complication of any invasive procedure but it is rare with tattooing. A new disposable sterile needle is used for each patient. As there can be some bleeding initially, a dressing is applied which you should keep on until the next day.

What about aftercare?

You will be able to shower or bath (but not soak in the bath) the next day, you can then gently remove the dressing, by which time the tattoo area has begun to heal. There may be some light scabbing at this stage. **It is important not to get any**

scabbed areas soaking wet and to let it fall off naturally. It is advised you can have a quick bath or shower (if showering keep your back to the water) and pat the area dry with a clean hand towel. Post procedure you will receive written and verbal aftercare advice.

Poor colour match with untreated nipple

A poor colour match is the most common problem that occurs. Initially the tattoo will look darker and a different colour to the expected outcome. This is normal as the skin underneath will be red and take a couple of weeks to recover from the procedure.

However, if the colour still doesn't match after it has healed this can usually be corrected.

Sometimes this can be difficult and if you are particularly unhappy with the outcome, the only option may be to tattoo your untreated side also, in order to achieve a good match. As with breast reconstruction, it is important that you do not have unrealistic expectations.

Allergy to tattoo dyes

The dyes we use are very safe and an allergic reaction is rare. Testing for allergies is not generally helpful, as a reaction can take months or years to manifest itself. An allergic reaction is also unlikely to occur with the pigments that we use. If you have any further questions before your appointment please call and discuss it with us.

Your appointment has been made for _____

Location _____

Your appointment is with _____

Contact details _____

Important:

If you cannot keep your appointment, or have been given one that is unsuitable, please let us know as soon as possible. Your call will give someone else the chance to be seen and will help us keep waiting times to a minimum.

Public Transport and Travel Information

Bus details available from:

Lothian Buses on 0131 555 6363 www.lothianbuses.co.uk

Traveline Scotland on 08712002233 or www.travelinescotland.com

Train details available from:

National Rail Enquiries on 03457 484 950 or www.nationalrail.co.uk

Patient Transport

Patient Transport will only be made available if you have a medical/clinical need.

Telephone **0300 123 1236** *calls charged at local rate up to 28 days in advance to book, making sure you have your CHI Number available. Hard of hearing or speech Impaired? Use text relay: Use text relay: **18001-0300 123 1236*** (calls charged at local rate). To cancel patient transport, telephone: 0800 389 1333 (Freephone 24 hour answer service).