

Breast Care

Tattooing Service

Nipple/areola tattooing

This is a minor procedure performed under aseptic technique using antiseptic and sterilised equipment. It is performed to help create the vision of a more realistic areolar area following breast reconstruction.

Who will perform this procedure?

A fully trained, medically approved and assessed Breast Care Nurse or a Breast Care Nurse under supervised practice for Nipple Tattooing.

What is tattooing?

Tattooing is the application of a semi-permanent colour into the top layer of your skin with the use of a small hand-held machine. It is often used to compliment the surgical reconstruction of the nipple.

This is a process ideally done over two visits, the first visit involves implanting colour in the skin and the second visit to boost colour 6-8 weeks later and make any adjustments if needed.

Should you choose to have your areolar tattooed, you may expect to return for colour boosting as with time the colour will fade. This may be due to many factors; age, skin type, medication, lifestyle. Colour boosting can be annual maintenance or every 2-3 years.

If you choose not to have this done please contact the Breast Care Nurses and we will cancel your appointment.

Will the procedure take long?

You will need to be in the Unit for approximately 1 hour. This is because of the preparation time and possible application of local anaesthetic cream if required, as you would need to allow the anaesthetic cream to take effect.

Will it hurt?

You may experience some sensation around your nipple. If your procedure is uncomfortable for you a topical local anaesthetic cream could be applied – this would delay your procedure by 45 minutes allowing the cream to take effect. However, most women find local anaesthetic cream is not required for this procedure.



Patient Information

How is the procedure carried out?

During your consultation you will be asked to stand in front of a mirror in order to select and mark the area of the breast which will be tattooed. Once the area has been selected you will be asked to lie on the examination couch to perform the tattooing procedure.

The colour used to make the pigment (dye) for the tattoo is made up of natural additives and the colours of the pigment to be used are mixed together according to each individual. Where applicable these are selected to match your other nipple and areolar. The procedure involves the use of a hand-held device that works like a miniature sewing machine, with a group of needles and punctures the skin at a superficial level implanting the pigment.

Will tattooing puncture prosthesis?

No. When tattooing is done, it is only the top layer of your skin that is involved. Your prosthesis is protected under deeper layers.

Advice following the procedure:

- Following the procedure, a dressing will be applied over the tattooed area.
- You may continue to shower avoiding soaking your dressing during your shower. Pat dry with gauze supplied.
- Leave the dressing, in place for 48 hours. Please, remove the dressing after this time period
- It is normal to expect some temporary inflammation around the tattoo area for the first day or so. As part of the healing process, the tattoo area crusts slightly and some slight peeling of the skin is normal.
- Contact the Breast Care Nurse by telephone if you have any concerns following your procedure or removal of dressing to discuss your satisfaction with the shape and size of tattoo area. Avoid wearing a lacy bra for a period of 2 weeks or until scab formation (if apparent) has healed.

Having Medical Photography:

Your consultant requests you have photography of your recent nipple tattooing approximately a month after your procedure.

However if there is fading of colour photography would not be useful at this time and you may wish to contact the Breast Care Nurse to arrange colour boosting.

If you are satisfied a month after colour boosting you may have your photos taken then. Contact details of Medical Photography Department are on your request form given to you at your first appointment.

If you are at all unsatisfied with the tattooed area, it is important to contact the Breast Care Nurse prior to the Consultant appointment.

What are the risks?

- Minor bleeding from the tattooed area.
- Small risk of infection.

Patient Information

- Allergic reaction to the pigment, this is uncommon and is normally treated with topical cream, applied to the affected area.
- Over a period of time (approximately 4-6 weeks) the colour of the tattoo may fade, due to lightening of the colour pigments in the dye. Therefore, you may wish to have the tattoo repeated, if you feel this is right for you.

Holidays

It is advisable that you do not have your nipple tattooing performed 4 weeks prior to your holiday to allow for the healing process

It would be helpful to inform your Breast Care Nurse of any holiday dates so as appointments can be made accordingly.

Swimming

- It is advisable you do not swim for 4 weeks after your tattooing as chlorinated water may fade your tattoo and may also introduce potential infection.

Information about the colours used for your tattooing.

Date of tattooing:

Colours used:

Date of re-shade:

Colours used:

Date of re-shade:

Colours used:

If you require any further information or advice after reading this leaflet, do not hesitate to contact the Breast Care Nurses.

Sue Roberts

Hannah Colledge (Under Training)

Breast Screening Unit
University Hospital
Ground Floor – West Wing
Clifford Bridge Road
Coventry
CV2 2DX

Tel: 024 7696 7089

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this Information in another language or format please contact us and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

Document History

Author	Sue Roberts
Department	Breast Care
Contact	024 7696 7089
Published	August 2016
Reviewed	October 2018
Review	October 2020
Version	8
Reference	HIC/LFT/482/07