

Breast Care

Tattooing service

Nipple/areola tattooing

Nipple/areola tattooing is a minor procedure. It's performed under aseptic technique using antiseptic and sterilised equipment. It's performed to help create the vision of a more realistic areolar area after 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 using a small hand-held machine. It's 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. The second visit is 6-8 weeks later to boost colour and make any adjustments if needed.

If you choose to have your areolar tattooed, you may want to return for colour boosting as the colour will fade with time. This may be due to many



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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'll 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 needed – we need to allow the anaesthetic cream to take effect.

Will it hurt?

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

How is the procedure carried out?

During your consultation you'll be asked to stand in front of a mirror to select and mark the area of the breast to be tattooed. Once the area has been selected, you'll 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. The colours of the pigment to be used are mixed together according to each individual. Where applicable, they're selected to match your other nipple and areolar.

The procedure involves using a hand-held device that works like a miniature sewing machine with a group of needles. It punctures the skin at a superficial level implanting the pigment.

Will tattooing puncture prosthesis?

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

Advice following the procedure:

- After the procedure, a dressing will be applied over the tattooed area.
- You may continue to shower. Avoid soaking your dressing during your shower. Pat dry with gauze supplied.
- Leave the dressing in place for 48 hours. Remove the dressing after this time period.
- It's 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 after your procedure or removal of dressing to discuss your satisfaction with the shape and size of tattoo area. Avoid wearing a lacy bra for 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. You may wish to contact the breast care nurse to arrange colour boosting.

If you're 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're at all unsatisfied with the tattooed area, it's important to contact the breast care nurse before the consultant appointment.

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What are the risks?

- Minor bleeding from the tattooed area.
- Small risk of infection.
- Allergic reaction to the pigment. This is uncommon and is usually treated with a topical cream applied to the affected area.
- Over approximately 4-6 weeks the colour of the tattoo may fade due to lightening of the colour pigments in the dye. You may wish to have the tattoo repeated if you feel this is right for you.

Holidays

It's advisable you do not have your nipple tattooing performed 4 weeks before your holiday. This is to allow for the healing process to take place.

Inform your breast care nurse of any holiday dates so appointments can be made accordingly.

Swimming

It's advisable you do not swim for 4 weeks after your tattooing. 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 would like any more information or advice after reading this leaflet, do not hesitate to contact the breast care nurses.

Patient Information

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