

Cosmetic Tattooing Following Breast Reconstruction Surgery

Patient Information

Breast Care Service



The Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website is available on the link:
<https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets> or scan the QR code.

Author ID: SW
Leaflet ref: SBC 007
Version: 8
Leaflet title: Cosmetic Tattooing Following Breast Reconstruction Surgery
Last review: March 2022
Expiry date: March 2024



What is it?

Micro pigmentation is a procedure that permanently alters the skin of your reconstructed breast. It is similar to a tattoo applied by a trained professional. Most patients require two or three initial treatments to achieve and maintain the desired outcome.

What are the benefits?

Many women find that this improves the cosmetic appearance of their breast and that this procedure enhances the quality of life following breast reconstruction surgery.

How is the procedure carried out?

- You will be asked to sign a consent form.
- A specially trained nurse will perform the procedure in the out-patients clinic.
- A small amount of pigment (dye) will be applied to an area of skin and left in place for half an hour to test for any allergic reaction.
- The area to be tattooed will be cleaned using antiseptic lotion; to reduce the risk of infection.
- The area to be tattooed will be marked so that it matches with the natural breast. This will be agreed between you and the nurse.
- Local anaesthesia in a cream form may be applied (depending on sensation) to the marked area and covered with a small dressing; this would then be left in place for half an hour.
- A tattoo stylus, a pen like device with a fine needle attached is used, which vibrates. This makes tiny puncture marks into the skin that the pigment flows into, staining the skin the desired colour.
- The pigments are chosen to match the natural breast and are tattooed on to the skin using a special sterile tattooing needle through a series of injections into the selected area. A new needle is used for each patient and thrown away to prevent cross infection.
- With your consent photographs may be taken at the beginning and end of your treatment and kept in your medical notes as a visual record of your completed treatment.

Risks associated with the procedure

The nurse who performs the procedure colour matches by eye. It is important to note that it is not possible to get a 100% colour match. The colours are also likely to change over time and may lighten. Swimming in chlorinated water can, in some cases, encourage colour fading to occur, therefore, women who swim regularly might require more frequent top-up treatments.

The nurse will discuss the following risks with you before treatment:

- Not achieving an exact colour match.
- Colour spreading from the original position.
- Fading of colour over time.
- Uneven pigment colour over the areola.
- Scarring of the area if the scab does not heal properly.
- Infection, which can be treated with antibiotics from your G.P.
- Allergy to the pigment and/or anaesthetic (for numbing the skin).

After the procedure

- The procedure is completed in approximately half an hour depending on the size and depth of colour matching. A dressing will be applied over the tattooed area.
- You will experience slight swelling and redness to the area following the procedure and the skin may feel tight. These symptoms will subside within one to seven days.

Skin care instructions

The following instructions must be carefully followed for at least two weeks following the procedure to ensure successful results:

1. Do not wash the area for the first seven days.
2. Apply Chloramphenicol ointment and a fresh dressing daily for the first seven days – these will be given to you after the procedure.
3. After seven days apply a light coating of Vaseline (or similar petroleum jelly) to the area using a cotton bud before showering. This protects the area whilst you shower.
4. During the two weeks following treatment you should not use soap on the tattooed area, sunbathe, swim, or use a sauna/Jacuzzi.
5. The pigmented area of skin will form a scab. It is important that you do not pick or peel off the scab because this can remove the pigments and cause scarring.
6. To prevent infection, do not touch the pigmented area with your fingers until it has completely healed.
7. Consider wearing a cotton bra that avoids seams that lie across the nipple area for two weeks.

Check-ups and results

Before you leave the out-patient department you will be given details of when you need to return to clinic for a check up to discuss any further treatment if necessary.

Contact Information

Please telephone the Breast Care Nurses on 01942 774720 if you have any queries or questions regarding this leaflet.

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan
WN1 2NN

Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

© Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of the copyright owner.

Call 111 first when it's less urgent than 999.



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

GOLD AWARD 2021

Proudly serving those who serve.

Phone: 0808 802 1212

Text: 81212

www.veteransgateway.org.uk

