

# Medical tattoos after breast surgery

## Breast Care Unit Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

This leaflet is for women who have had breast surgery. It gives information on nipple areola tattooing to help you make a decision about whether to have it. The leaflet includes:

- What nipple areola tattooing is.
- The benefits and risks of the procedure.
- How the procedure is carried out.
- What happens after the procedure.

### What is nipple areola tattooing?

After breast and nipple reconstruction surgery, colour can be added to create a natural looking areola to your new breast(s). The areola is the coloured area on the breast around the nipple.

Tattooing is the application of semi-permanent colour into the top layer of your skin with the use of a small hand held machine. It is a minor procedure performed using disinfected and sterilised equipment.

## What are the benefits?

It helps to create a more realistic-looking nipple/areola after breast reconstruction.

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.

## What are the risks?

All procedures carry some risks and it is important that we make you aware of these. For this procedure the risks include:

- Occasionally, minor infection can be a problem; therefore, your nurse will discuss ways of minimising the chance of this happening.
- Scarring.
- Uneven colour.
- Fading of colour.
- Slight skin irritation or allergy to the colour used. If you have any known allergies, please tell your nurse before you have the procedure.

## Who will perform this procedure?

It will be carried out by a fully trained, medically approved and assessed member of the breast care nursing team:

Mrs Lynn Park-Davies

## Will it hurt?

It should not hurt as we will numb the area first using a local anaesthetic cream.

## How long will the procedure take?

You will need to be in the department for three to four hours although the actual procedure takes 30 to 45 minutes. This is because of preparation time needed for the anaesthetic cream to take effect.

## **What happens after the tattooing?**

We will send you an appointment about seven weeks after the procedure to check and discuss your tattoo. Please be aware that more than one procedure is sometimes required to achieve a satisfactory result.

## **Will tattooing puncture my breast implant?**

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

## **Will the tattoo be a perfect match?**

Whilst every effort is made to match the tattoo to your original skin colour, certain circumstances may cause the original skin tone to change, for example, temperature and emotion. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve a perfect match. If necessary, we can arrange more tattooing to adjust the tone at a later date.

## **How long will the colour last?**

Initially, the tattoo will be very bright but this will soon fade and after four to six weeks, the colour will be stable. The colour will never 'rub off' but it does fade over time because of the skin's natural regeneration (when old skin cells are replaced by new ones).

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Lynn Park-Davies on 01384 244065 (8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/oncology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

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Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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