

Patient Information Leaflet

Micropigmentation After Breast Reconstruction Surgery

Produced by:
Breast Care Nurses

August 2012
Review due: August 2015



What is Micropigmentation?

Micropigmentation, otherwise known as 'medical tattooing' is a type of semi-permanent colour applied to the skin of your breast to recreate the colour and shape of the nipple areola after breast reconstruction.

How is this done?

A trained and experienced practitioner will perform the procedure. You will be involved in choosing the colour match of your nipple in consultation with your micropigmentation practitioner. The colour match for your nipple areola will be as realistic as possible and will match your remaining nipple as near as possible (if you have had a double mastectomy you will be able to choose the colour).

Some patients require more than one treatment. The tattoo will last for up to three years or longer, but this varies. Some patients require further follow up treatments every year to achieve and maintain the desired outcome.

What happens during the procedure?

The micropigmentation procedure usually takes 30-60 minutes, depending on individual requirements. Completion time varies according to:

- The position, width and depth of the nipple areola area
- The depth of colour to be matched
- Acceptance of the pigment to skin type

Depending on the sensitivity of the area, you may require a local anaesthetic for the procedure. This will be applied as a topical cream at least 30 minutes before the procedure.

The pigment is applied using a pen-like device, which basically works like a miniature sewing machine: the needles move up and down really quickly, penetrating the outer and inner layers (epidermis and dermis) of the skin, implanting the coloured pigment. The practitioner holds the machine with a steady hand while guiding it along the skin. The speed and power can be controlled by a foot switch or pedal. The pigments are built up using dots, lines and/or a circular motion.

Consent

Before a doctor or other health professional examines or treats you, they need your consent. A written record of your decision is helpful. If your treatment involves sedation or general anaesthesia, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you later change your mind, you're entitled to withdraw consent – even after signing.

Risks/Benefits

Micropigmentation is an invasive procedure and is not without risk. The main risks include:

- Not achieving an exact colour match
- Fading of colour over time
- Scarring
- Pigment migration or spreading
- Uneven pigment colour
- Slight skin irritation
- Small risk of infection

You should not have Micropigmentation if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

What factors may affect the results?

The results of Micropigmentation is partially determined by variations in skin type, and can be affected by:

- Medication
- Natural skin tones
- Skin characteristics (dryness, oiliness, sun damage, thickness, colour)
- PH balance of the skin (acidity)
- Alcohol intake
- Smoking
- Individual healing ability
- Illness

If you have a heart condition, epilepsy, haemophilia or other clotting disorder, or if you have had hepatitis over the past 12 months, **you must inform your practitioner before the procedure.**

Do not take Aspirin or drink alcohol for 24 hours before the procedure

What should you expect after the procedure?

You will experience slight swelling and redness following the procedure and the skin may feel 'tight'. These symptoms will subside within 1-7 days depending on how sensitive your skin is.

You should be able to resume normal activities immediately following the procedure; however, use of cosmetics, excessive perspiration and exposure of the affected area to the sun should be avoided until the area is fully healed.

Also, if you swim or the area is in contact with chlorine or saltwater during the healing phase, the pigment is at risk of bleaching.

Over the initial few days, the pigmented area of skin will form a scab. This will last for 14- 21 days, when exfoliation of the dead cells (the scab) will occur as healing takes place. You will then notice slight fading of the pigment and softening of the colour.

It is important that the healing process takes its natural course. Scarring can occur if the scabs are removed or knocked off prematurely.

UV protective swimwear and cream should be worn whilst you are on holiday, and due to difficulty in colour matching, the procedure should not be done on tanned skin but would wait for the tan to fade and for the skin to return to its natural colour.

Skin care instructions

The following instructions must be carefully followed for at least two weeks after the procedure to ensure pigment retention, prevention of infection and successful results.

- Before showering or bathing, apply a light coating of Vaseline to the areola. This protects the area by enabling the water to bead off the damaged tissue.
- Cover the areola with a protective dressing during the day, uncover the area whilst sleeping, but do not sleep on your stomach. This protects the tissue and promotes healing.
- If a crust appears on the areola, **do not pick or peel it off**, as this would remove the pigment as well as the crust.
- Do not use soap, sunbathe, swim, sauna or Jacuzzi during the two weeks following both the initial and follow up procedures.

- To prevent infection, do not touch the pigmented area with your fingers until it is completely healed. Use cotton buds to apply ointments.

If you have any questions please phone
The Breast Care Nurses.
TEL 534562

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call Island Health Line on 0845 6031007

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at enquires@cqc.org.uk

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: 01983 550386 to talk to Island Quitters.

Ref: BC/MP/02