

Aftercare advice following your nipple-areola tattoo

This leaflet explains more about returning to your everyday activities after your tattoo. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Looking after your tattoo

When you get home

- Remove the dressing and wear a loose-fitting top with no bra to allow the excess fluid to dry out.

The next day

- You can shower in the morning, but try to avoid water directly hitting the treated area, then gently pat dry with gauze.
- If you want to bathe, avoid soaking the area in the bath water or using bath products.
- Apply a daily dressing for the first three days to avoid friction from your clothing and to support the early healing process.

The first 72 hours

- In the first couple of days the tattooed area may form a fine scab – do not pick or peel off the scabbed area as this will result in removal of the colour and can cause scarring.
- The scab can last for a couple of weeks and you will notice the pigment fade and soften as the scab comes away.

Will I be in pain?

You may experience slight swelling and redness following the procedure and the skin may feel tight. This should get better within the first week depending on how sensitive your skin is.

When can I return to normal activities?

You should be able to resume normal activities immediately following the procedure. However, avoid swimming and using a sauna or jacuzzi for two weeks after the procedure as chlorine can act as a bleach which will change the appearance of the tattoo. If using the gym within the first two weeks following your tattoo, please cover the treated area with a small amount of petroleum jelly beforehand to limit friction. Please ensure the area is cleaned afterwards.

What should I do if I have a problem?

Infection is very rare. If you experience any of the following symptoms, please see your GP or contact the breast reconstruction clinical nurse specialist team as soon as possible. Out of hours contact your local Emergency Department (A&E).

- Swelling and/or heat that doesn't resolve in the first two days.
- Redness spreading from the tattoo that gets worse over a few days.
- A fever (temperature higher than 37.5C).

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will have a follow-up appointment six to eight weeks after the initial treatment. Following an assessment, the nurse will discuss with you if further pigment is necessary.

It is usual to need two treatments as the colour will fade over time and a further procedure may be required to achieve and maintain the desired colour.

You will then be discharged from the tattoo clinic. The final result can last between one and six years. Your GP or breast care team can then refer you back to the department if the colour needs to be renewed.

The tattoo clinic is very popular and there is a waiting list, so please let us know as soon as possible if you cannot make your appointment as it will be made available for another patient.

Further information

Giving blood

The Red Cross advises not giving blood for four months after a tattoo.

MRI scans

Medical tattooing can show up as an artefact on the scan and some patients may experience a tingling sensation due to small amounts of iron oxide in the pigments. Please inform the radiologist before the scan.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact the breast reconstruction clinical nurse specialist team, **t:** 07717 694 218, or **t:** 020 7188 7188 and ask for extension 53267. You can also bleep a member of the team by calling **t:** 020 7188 7188 and asking for the bleep desk, then ask for bleep 1993.

Alternatively, you can email us at **e:** BreastReconstructionNurses@gstt.nhs.uk.

For appointment queries, please contact the plastic surgery access team, **t:** 020 7188 8882.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

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