



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Nipple-areola Micro-pigmentation

Issued by the Breast Team



This information leaflet is designed to help you understand what is involved in the outpatient procedure of nipple-areola micropigmentation (tattooing).

What is micro-pigmentation?

- It is the implantation of small amounts of natural pigment (dye) via a needle into the surface layer of the skin to create permanent colour.
- It is permanent and non-reversible.
- It does not penetrate the skin as deeply as traditional tattooing.
- It is used to give colour to the nipple and areola following nipple reconstruction.
- Even if a nipple reconstruction has not been performed, the areola colour can still be implanted into the skin and special shading techniques are used to create the appearance of a nipple.
- The procedure will be carried out by a nurse who has been specially trained in micro-pigmentation technique.

How many treatments are required?

- Most patients require a minimum of two initial treatments with approximately one month between the first and second treatment.
- Initially the colour may appear slightly darker.
- A degree of colour fading is quite common and further follow-up treatments may be required.

What about allergic reactions?

- It is very unlikely that you would develop a reaction to the colour pigments used in micro-pigmentation.
- If you have any known allergies, the nurse may advise you to undergo a skin patch allergy test at least 24 hours before carrying out the procedure. This would include testing the pigment to be used and also the local anaesthetic ointment usually used to numb the area of skin to be micro-pigmented.
- If an allergic reaction occurred then you would be referred back to your plastic surgery consultant for advice.

How long does the procedure take?

- Your initial appointment can take over an hour.
- Subsequent appointments usually take 20 – 30 minutes.
- If local anaesthetic is to be used, this may take up to one hour to take effect.

What does the procedure entail?

- The nurse will complete a short assessment form about your general health before carrying out the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form.
- The area to be coloured will be identified and position and colouring checked with you, using a mirror.
- The pigment is applied using a pen like device which basically works like a miniature sewing machine: the needles move up and down very quickly, penetrating the outer layers of the skin, implanting the colour pigment. The pigments are built up using dots, lines or a circular motion.
- The machine used for this procedure is manufactured to European guidelines for health and safety and is cleaned between each patient use. Any part that comes into contact with the patient is sterilized before use and the needles are single patient use only.

What should you expect after the procedure?

- You will experience slight swelling and redness following the procedure.
- The skin may feel ‘tight’.
- These symptoms should subside within one to seven days depending on your skin sensitivity.
- The pigmented area of skin may form a scab which will gradually break off as healing takes place over 2-3 weeks.
- There will be slight fading of the pigment.
- Scarring can occur if the scabs are accidentally or deliberately removed too early.

What skin care instruction do I need to follow?

- Use of cosmetic skin products, excessive perspiration and exposure of the affected area to the sun should be avoided.
- The dressing which is applied immediately after the procedure should remain in place overnight and then removed.
- You can take a bath or shower. Do not touch or use soap on the treated area. The dressing should only be removed if it becomes wet or is loose and is easily removed.
- The area treated is best protected using a small thin application of antiseptic ointment.
- To promote healing, loose fitting clothing should be worn without a bra for the first few days.
- If a crust appears do not pick it or peel it off as this would remove the colour pigment as well as the crust.
- Do not sunbathe, swim, or use a sauna or Jacuzzi during the first two weeks following treatments.
- A follow up appointment will be arranged before you leave the outpatients department after your treatment.
- Once you are discharged any subsequent tattooing treatments will need a referral from your GP

What risks are there with this procedure?

- Not achieving an exact colour match
- Scarring
- Pigment migration (spreading)
- Uneven pigment colour

What factors may affect the results?

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

If you require any further information or advice please contact:

Support Contact Numbers

Reconstruction Specialist Nurse

North Tyneside General Hospital

Telephone: 0191 293 4337

Specialist Nurse Practitioner (Breast Care)

Wansbeck General Hospital

Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm

Telephone: 01670 529636

Breast Care Nurse

Hexham General Hospital

Telephone: 01434 655 386

Breast Cancer Care Helpline

Telephone: 0808 800 6000

www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Relief Helpline

Telephone: 0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk

Breast Care Campaign

www.breastcare.co.uk

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

PIN 167/V3

Review date: June 2022

© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust