

Areola restoration

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.

Skin Care Instructions

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

1. Before showering or bathing, apply a light coating of retro jelly e.g. vaseline to the areola. This protects the area by enabling the water to bead off the damaged tissue.
2. Cover the areola with a protective dressing during the day, uncover the area while sleeping, but do not sleep on your stomach. This protects the tissue and promotes healing.
3. 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.
4. Do not use soap, sunbathe, swim, sauna or Jacuzzi during the two weeks following both the initial and follow up procedures.
5. To prevent infection, do not touch the pigmented area with your fingers until it is completely healed. Use cotton buds to apply ointments.

Introduction

The majority of women who undergo mastectomy will lose their nipple and areola. Once you have had your breast and nipple reconstructed, and your wounds have healed properly, you will be offered the opportunity to have the areola restored. This is performed using a procedure known as micropigmentation or tattooing. This is an invasive procedure which uses needles to place pigments under the skin.

A trained and experienced practitioner will perform the procedure, but it 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

You will be responsible for determining the colour match of your nipple in consultation with your micro-pigmentation practitioner.

How long will it take?

Most patients require 2 - 3 initial treatments and possibly a further follow up treatment every year to achieve and maintain the desired outcome.

100% success cannot always be guaranteed and the extent of the procedure depends on what changes are desired and the method the practitioner deems appropriate.

What factors may affect the results?

The result of pigment implantation is partially determined by variations in skin type and can be affected by:

- Medication
- Natural skin overtones
- 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 prior to the procedure.

Allergy test

You will be offered a skin patch test 24 hours prior to the procedure. It is advisable to have the test if you have a history of

any type of allergy. The purpose of this test is to detect allergies or other reactions to the topical anaesthetic and pigments used during the procedure. A full 24 hours is required after the skin test to observe for allergy occurrence.

Equipment

All equipment used is sterile. Disposable needles are used for each individual procedure and disposed of immediately.

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

The pigment is applied using a pen like device, which works like a miniature sewing machine: the needles move up and down really fast, penetrating the 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.