



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

3D Micro-pigmentation to the nipple/areola

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Specialist Breast Care Nurses

Telephone: 01904 726775

Or email yhs-tr.yorkbreastcarenurses@nhs.net

York Hospital

Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Scarborough Hospital

Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

Introduction

We have produced this leaflet to give you general information about your procedure and we hope it will answer most of your questions.

It is not intended to replace the discussion between you and your health care professional but may act as a starting point for discussion.

If you have any questions or concerns that you would like to discuss before the procedure, please contact the Breast Care Nurses on 01904 726775.

What is 3D Micro-pigmentation?

Nipple/areola micro-pigmentation is a medical tattoo, where semi-permanent pigment (colour) is implanted into the skin of your reconstructed breast to re-create a colour and shape of the nipple/areola. The aim of the procedure is to create an areola that is as realistic as possible, although it will not match exactly your other nipple/areola.

The pigment is applied using a pen-like device loaded with a sterile cartridge (containing needles). The needles move up and down at a rapid rate to penetrate the outer and inner layers of the skin. This introduces the pigment to the skin. The pigments used are iron based and are pharmaceutically tested.

Initially the colour when first applied to the skin will appear darker. You should expect it to fade or lighten up by almost a half (40%) in the following weeks. The colours used will be documented in your notes for future reference to help with colour selection for subsequent procedures.

Are there any risks or complications?

Some of the risks or complications are listed below:

- Allergy to pigments – a patch test must be completed prior to your appointment.
- Infection: this is extremely rare.
- Uneven pigment over the area: for example, if you have excessive scarring the pigment will appear differently on scar tissue. This is because the scar tissue does not take up as much pigment as normal skin.

Although these complications are possible, please remember that they are all rare.

You must let us know if you may be pregnant: Although the iron-based pigment is safe for you, we do not know if there are side effects for unborn babies.

Are there any alternatives?

- Prosthetic (stick on) nipples – please contact us for more information.
- Individually made prosthetic nipples – please contact us for more information.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

Most people do not have sensation in their reconstructed breast; however, some do experience a vibration within the reconstructed breast, arm, back or armpit (axilla) during the procedure.

Traditional tattoo artists in the high street do not use anaesthetic cream, however, if you feel your reconstruction is sensitive then please use local anaesthetic cream and a protective dressing from your local pharmacy before the procedure. The whole tube of cream should be applied to the central area of the reconstructed breast (the cream should be applied in a blob; do not rub into the skin, and the dressing placed over the cream). This should be applied about three hours before your appointment and will help reduce any discomfort during the procedure.

You will be provided with a patch test with your appointment letter. Please follow the instructions provided to carry out the patch test at home, at least 48 hours before your appointment. The procedure cannot go ahead without a prior patch test.

Upon arrival for your appointment, you will be called into a clinic room where the practitioner; trained in micro-pigmentation, will carry out the procedure.

You will be asked to sign a consent form (micro-pigmentation to the nipple/areola). Additional consent forms will be required for photography (if applicable).

We encourage you to be actively involved in your session, therefore you will be asked to stand in front of a mirror with the practitioner to assist with the positioning, shape and colour to be used during the procedure.

All equipment used is sterile and disposable needles are used for each individual procedure.

A cotton pad/gauze will be applied which can be removed the next day. We will also use a spray and ointment after the procedure to help soothe the skin and to promote healing.

Please avoid:

- Picking or scratching the area
- Exercise/sweating
- Sun exposure
- Swimming pools and hot tubs

What happens after my procedure?

You will be able to drive yourself home and be able to resume normal activities immediately after the procedure.

The use of perfumed creams, excessive exercise, swimming, a hot tub and exposure to the sun on the treated area should be avoided until the area is completely healed (approximately seven to 10 days).

When showering, please avoid shower gels and powerful water jets onto the treated area.

Do not pick off any dry skin or scabs which have formed over the treated area, as this will remove the pigment. The skin may peel. You may experience some slight swelling or redness to the skin around the areola. This should subside within a week.

If you have any questions or concerns please ring the Breast Care Nurses office on 01904 726775.

Please note: if you have an MRI scan in future, you must let the radiologist looking after you know that you have “iron oxide micropigmentation”. These scans work by magnets and as iron is magnetic, you may have a slight tingling sensation during your scan in the treated area.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Breast Care Nurse Team, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 726775 or email yhs-tr.yorkbreastcarenurses@nhs.net.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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