If you are worried that you may have an infection or any other complication you must contact the Plastic Trauma co-ordinator, the on-call Plastic doctor or the ward you were discharged from. If you are unable to get the assistance needed please attend the Emergency Department at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

Useful contact numbers:

Plastic Nurse Practitioner: 07901943767  
Plastic Trauma Co-ordinator: 07557316174  
Out of hours: Plastics On-Call Doctor: 01296 31500 (bleep 524)  
Day surgery unit (Stoke Mandeville Hospital): 01296 315633  
Day surgery unit (Wycombe Hospital): 01494 425581  
Plastics Consultant Secretaries: 01296 316639, 315119, 315117

Or email: bht.plastic.surgeryelective@nhs.net

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?  
Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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Patient information leaflet  
If you require a translation or an alternative format of this leaflet please call PALS on 01296 316042

Micro-Pigmentation (Medical Tattooing)  
Breast Reconstruction Service

Safe & compassionate care, every time
Aims of this leaflet

This leaflet is aimed at patients who have undergone breast reconstructive surgery and are considering micro-pigmentation (medical tattooing) to create or enhance the image of the areola and nipple.

How is it done?

The hand-held machine holds small, single-use needles that make tiny holes into the surface of the skin allowing colour to be introduced to create shading. This causes an initial inflammation to the area treated, which can bleed for 12-24 hours.

Before your treatment is carried out, you will have a consultation with one of the doctors or nurse practitioners from the Plastic Surgery Department. A detailed medical history will be taken and details of the procedure will be discussed with you, with the option to view photographs of completed tattooed areolas.

The healing phases

The treated area is expected to go through three normal healing phases:
• Heal
• Peel
• Fade

More information

If you have any problems or further questions, please contact us directly using the details at the back of this leaflet.

You will receive a letter confirming the date and time of your initial or any follow up appointments.

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Frequently asked questions (aftercare)

When should I return to the clinic?
Follow-up sessions may be needed to achieve good results. A follow-up session will be booked for you, approximately two months later.

How will I know if I have an infection?
Infection is very rare. Colours will initially appear very intense immediately after the session, and you may have a few spots of blood and some swelling. If the treated area continues to stay red and swollen with leakage, causing excessive heat and pain, then it is advisable to contact your GP or the clinic for advice.

Can I go swimming?
Until the area has healed, we advise you not to go into chlorinated water (pool, spa, etc.). However, if this is unavoidable, then we advise that you apply a layer of Vaseline over the treated area. If you are a regular swimmer protect the tattoo with a waterproof plaster.

Can I go in the sun?
Your treated area should not be exposed to direct sunlight until fully healed. Once this has occurred, you may go out in the sun, but we advise a waterproof sun block to prevent sunburn, fading and colour changes.

When can I use my normal health and beauty products?
Once the area has healed, usually after 14 days, you may resume your normal skin routine.

Before the procedure

• You will be offered an appointment at our outpatient clinic with our doctor/advanced nurse practitioner for consultation, marking and consenting
• Local anaesthetic cream will be given to you to apply 1 hour prior to your procedure.

During the procedure

• The area will be cleaned with an antiseptic wipe, removing the anaesthetic cream
• The markings will be finalised and the colour will be prepared to match your skin
• Treatment takes up to one hour.

Frequently asked questions (Procedure)

How many sessions will I need?
Usually one to two sessions with approximately eight week intervals is sufficient.

Who will carry out the tattooing procedure?
Fully trained professionals will carry out the procedure; either a doctor or our surgical nurse practitioner.

‘Micro-pigmentation is an art process and not an exact science, therefore results will vary from patient to patient’
Your aftercare

It is important you follow these guidelines to ensure you get the best possible result from your micro-pigmentation treatment.

Additional treatments cannot be undertaken until the area has completely healed.

• Leave the dressing in place for 24 hours. Gently remove the dressing. Avoid direct jets from the shower, or soaking in the bath for too long, otherwise this will cause the pigment to be removed. Gently pat the area dry, avoiding excessive rubbing.
• After washing your hands apply a thin layer of Vaseline. This will help heal the area with minimal scabbing; continue this for two weeks, washing your hands afterwards.
• Do not use any other products on the treated area (cosmetics and cleansers) until the area has completely healed; this will take approximately two weeks.
• It is normal for you to have some swelling around the treated area for a couple of days and crusting of the tattoo. It is important you leave and don’t pick at these scabs, as it will result in the colour being removed.

Risks/complications

Some of the risks of the procedure include:
• Allergic reaction to the pigments used – an allergy ‘patch’ test is available if indicated
• Infection
• Swelling around the treated area, usually lasting two or three days. There can also be some crusting of the tattoo.
• Bleeding
• Pigment fading – the tattoo is non permanent therefore will require a top up when fading occurs; this can be done any time up to five years.
• Nipple flattening – when tattooing the nipple, the area may flatten due to the tattooing technique
• If you ever have an MRI scan, the tattooed area may show up on the scan. Some patients have reported feeling a tingling sensation. Please inform your Radiologist.