



Micro-pigmentation (medical tattooing)

Information for patients from the Maxillofacial Unit

What is micro-pigmentation?

Micro-pigmentation is for patients who have had breast reconstruction. We use micro-pigmentation to create or enhance the image of an areola and nipple.

We apply the pigment using a hand held machine. The machine uses sterile needles that make tiny holes into the surface of your skin. This allows colour to be introduced, to create shading. These needles are only used once.

What will happen before my procedure?

Before your treatment, you will have a consultation with the technician. The technician will take a detailed medical history. Please bring to this appointment a list of any medication you are currently taking.

The technician will discuss the procedure with you. Please use this time to ask any further questions or raise concerns.

Are there alternatives?

You may decide not to have the micro-pigmentation. Please note you have the right to withdraw your consent for treatment at any time.

Are there any risks?

Some of the risks of the procedure include the following.

- Not achieving an exact colour match with your existing areola and/or nipple.
- Scarring.
- A slight spreading of colour outside your areola.

- Uneven pigment colour.
- Infection.
- An allergy to the pigments used.
- Flattening of your nipple.

You will discuss these risks with the technician before your procedure. If you have any concerns or questions, please ask.

How many treatments are needed to achieve the final result?

After their first consultation, most patients need at least two further treatments. There will be approximately eight weeks between the two treatments.

As the pigment used is semi-permanent, a degree of colour fading is quite common. You may need further follow-up treatments in the future.

What may affect my results?

Micro-pigmentation is an art process and not an exact science. Results will vary from patient to patient.

The results of micro-pigmentation partly depend on the patient's skin type, but can also be affected by:

- any medication you are taking
- natural skin tones
- skin characteristics (dryness, oiliness, sun damage, acidity)
- lifestyle, such as alcohol or smoking, and
- an individual's healing ability.

What happens before, during, and after my procedure?

Before

- You will have a consultation with the technician.
- They will ask for your consent before they begin your procedure.
- Photographs will be taken of the area to be treated.
- If needed, your consultant or GP may have prescribed you local anaesthetic cream. Apply this at home before coming for each treatment session. The cream will help numb the area.

During

- The area will be cleaned with an antiseptic wipe, removing the anaesthetic cream.

- The technician will outline the area for tattooing. With your involvement, a pigment colour will be chosen to match the shade of your other nipple.
- The technician will guide the machine over your skin, gradually building up the colour effect.
- The treatment will take between 30 and 90 minutes.
- The procedure should not be painful, but you can expect some tingling.

After

- The area will be cleaned, photographs will be taken, and an ointment and dressing applied.
- You will be given an aftercare sheet to take home.
- **You must keep the treated area dry while it heals.** Avoid chlorinated water (such as a pool, spa, or jacuzzi) for at least 2 weeks after your treatment.
- For further information about aftercare, please speak to your technician.

Other information

If you ever have a MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan, the tattooed area may show up on the scan. Some patients have reported feeling a tingling sensation. If this happens, please tell your radiologist.

Further information

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact:

- **Head Maxillofacial Prosthetist**
Telephone: 01233 651859 (Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4pm)

What do you think of this leaflet?

We welcome feedback, whether positive or negative, as it helps us to improve our care and services.

If you would like to give us feedback about this leaflet, please fill in our short online survey. Either scan the QR code below, or use the web link. We do not record your personal information, unless you provide contact details and would like to talk to us some more.

Giving feedback about this leaflet



<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/MDOBU4/>

If you would rather talk to someone instead of filling in a survey, please call the Patient Voice Team.

- **Patient Voice Team**
Telephone: 01227 868605
Email (ekhuft.patientvoice@nhs.net)

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

Reference number: Web 016

First published:
April 2009

Last reviewed:
June 2025

Next review date:
October 2028

Copyright © East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.