

Department of Plastic Surgery

Medical tattooing

We use tattoos to create the image of an areola and nipple for women who have had breast reconstruction and also to camouflage some scars. The tattoos are applied with a small electric machine which holds needles that make tiny holes in the surface of the skin to allow the semi-permanent dye to create shading. These needles are used once only.

Before treatment

Please let us know before your treatment starts if you have any known **allergies**, for instance, to metals such as nickel, or to local anaesthetic or alcohol. Also, let us know if you are going on **holiday** within 6 weeks of your appointment or if you are unwell. Please phone the surgical secretaries on: **0161 918 7455** to arrange another appointment.

Agreeing to treatment

We will explain the procedure to you and ask for your written consent to proceed. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

On the day

Before we begin treatment, we will do a colour match of the area to be tattooed.

The nurse will then mix the colour from specialist pigments. It can take some time to get the exact shade. We will also discuss the size and position of the tattoo with you and you can view this in a mirror before the tattooing begins.

What the nurse will do:

- outline the area to be tattooed
- apply the colour-matched pigment to the tattoo area
- fix the pigment using needles (sterile disposable needles)
- clean the area and put on a dressing.

Aftercare

- Having a tattoo can sometimes be painful and sore for a few days afterwards.
- Do not worry if the colour looks dark and more intense than intended. This is quite normal.



- You can take the dressing off and shower after 24 hours. We advise you to shower with your back towards the water jets to avoid water directly hitting the treated area. Use gauze to blot the treated area dry.
- You may apply gauze over the tattoo for protection in your bra until any oozing stops.
- You may have temporary swelling around the tattoo for the first day or two. This is normal.
- Crusting can appear on the tattoo area and it is important not to pick at it.
- When the area is healed, usually between 7 to 10 days afterwards, you can use a moisturiser on the area.
- The tattoo should not be exposed to direct sunlight for at least 3 months to prevent sunburn or pigment changes.
- We recommend that you **do not go swimming**, use a jacuzzi or hot tub until the area is fully healed.
- Avoid high intensity exercise or use of a sauna that would make you sweat after treatment
- Some people may have a reaction to one of the pigments used for tattooing, resulting in swelling or itching. If there is any redness, heat or pain, please contact your GP.

Important information

Giving blood

The Red Cross has suggested that you do not give blood for 4 months after a tattoo.

MRI scan

It is important to let the radiologists know that you have medical tattooing before you have an MRI scan. You may also experience tingling sensation in the tattooed area during the scan.

Laser

Laser hair removal can sometimes turn the area of the tattoo black and therefore should be avoided after treatment.

Further tattooing

You may need additional tattoo sessions before you get the right colour or effect. If the colour fades, you may also need further touch-ups.

Contacts

If you have any concerns, please contact us on:

During the day

Breast reconstruction specialist nurse

0161 918 2196

Sarcoma specialist nurse

0161 918 2196

Surgical secretaries

0161 918 7455

Plastic surgery dressing clinic nurses

0161 918 7586 or 7587

After 5pm and at weekends

Call ward 3 on: **0161 918 7597** or The Christie Hotline on: **0161 446 3658**.

Notes:

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week