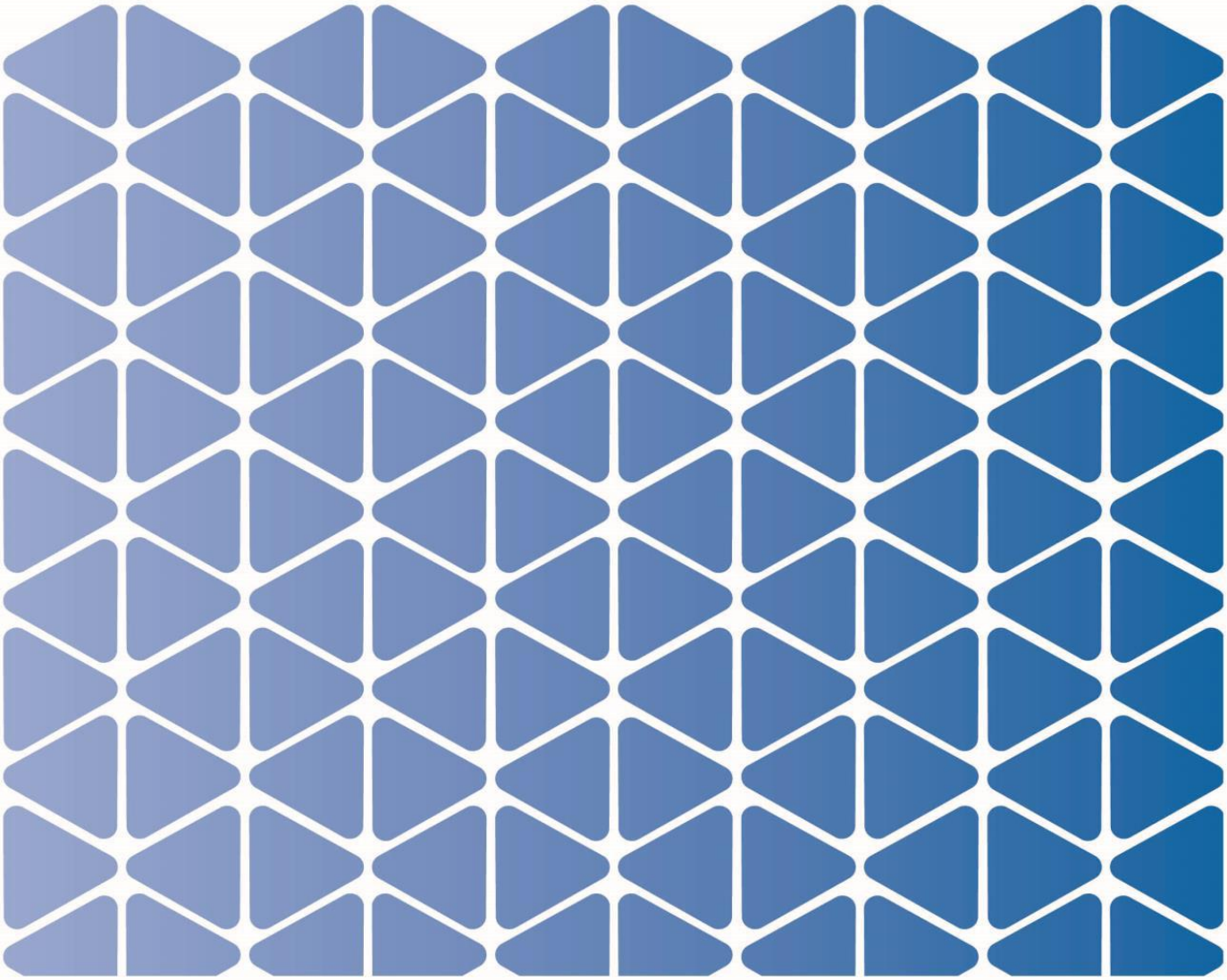
PATIENT INFORMATION

SEMI-PERMANENT MICRO PIGMENTATION OF NIPPLE/AREOLA COMPLEX AND AFTER CARE ADVICE



General Surgery

Name of procedure: Semi-permanent micro pigmentation of nipple/areola complex and after care advice

When your breast reconstructive surgery is complete, semi-permanent micro pigmentation (tattooing) can be used to colour the reconstructed nipple and give the illusion of an areola, as well as helping to disguise any scarring. Many patients find that this improves the cosmetic appearance of their reconstruction and enhances their quality of life.

- Although care is taken to try to match the size and colour of the opposite nipple/areola, it must be appreciated that this is not an exact science and a perfect match cannot be guaranteed. This procedure is not medically necessary but is your choice.
- The Breast Care Specialist Nurse will offer advice regarding colour match and areola size with the ultimate decision being made by the patient.
- It is likely that you will require one or two procedures before completion of the treatment, with a minimum of 6 weeks between each procedure.
- The pigmentation will fade over time and a re-touch procedure will be required to maintain the colour of the tattoo. The length of time before a re-touch is desirable will vary depending on age, skin type and the chosen colour. An average length of time would be 2-3 years.
- After treatment the treated area will appear red and swollen and may weep lymphatic fluid and blood. This will settle over the following few days but it is important to carefully follow the after-care advice given to you by the Breast Care Specialist Nurse.
- If you suffer from any skin allergies you may wish to have a skin test a few days prior to your procedure. Although this test can identify a reaction to the product used, it does not guarantee that an allergic response might not occur in the future. Please inform the Breast Care Specialist Nurse at least a week before your appointment if you require a skin test.
- Laser hair removal from the treated area can permanently alter the colour of the pigment used and should therefore be avoided.
- Please ensure that you have eaten before you attend for the procedure.
- Please try to avoid taking any aspirin or ibuprofen before the procedure as it may cause bleeding.
- An anaesthetic cream is used to de-sensitise the area to be treated, if necessary. The cream will be applied ½ hour before the procedure and covered with a film dressing. The use of this cream does not guarantee that no sensation will be felt during the procedure but this should be minimal.

- If you have an MRI or CT scan in the future please advise the Radiologist of your medical tattoo as this can affect the reading of your scan. You may also notice a slight tingling in the treated area.
- Please read the after-care instructions below and contact one of the Breast Care Specialist Nurses if you have any problems or queries.

Benefits of the procedure

The aim of having this procedure is to improve the cosmetic appearance of your reconstruction and enhances your quality of life and self-esteem.

Serious or frequent risks

There are some risks associated with this procedure, which includes problems with:

Infection

- There is a small risk of infection around the treated area.

Bleeding

- Some bleeding from the treated area can occur.

Allergic reaction

- Some people may experience a reaction to the products that are used. Please let the Breast Care Nurse Specialist know at least a week before your appointment if you require an allergy patch test before going ahead with the treatment.

Discomfort

- You may feel some discomfort while the treatment is being undertaken.

After care advice

If you have any queries or problems with your tattoo please contact the Breast Care Specialist Nurse. It is normal for the treated area to appear red and swollen and for the colour to seem dark initially, this will all settle within a few weeks.

Additional treatments cannot be undertaken until the area has completely healed therefore 4 – 6 weeks is left between appointments.

If showering within 24 hours please avoid hitting the treated area with the water jets.

Please avoid the gym for a minimum of 24 hours following your tattoo and the swimming pool and sauna for 1 week.

Once the area has healed completely (approximately 1 week) please use a total sun block if sunbathing to stop the colour fading.
Do not pick or pull at the treated area as it will result in pigment loss.

Your tattoo will go through three phases during healing:

Heal - The tattoo will dry and fine scabs will form
Peel - The scabs will drop off naturally
Fade - Over a 4 – 6 week period the final colour will be seen

If you have a dressing covering the area please remove it as soon as you get home. If it weeps lymphatic fluid or blood gently clean the area with cooled boiled water and gauze and blot gently to dry. If possible leave the area to air dry for as long as possible so try to wear loose fitting clothes. Only add a **fine** layer of Yellow Soft Paraffin if the area feels tight.

Giving Blood – The Red Cross advises not giving blood for 4 months after a tattoo.

Contact details
If you have any specific concerns that you feel have not been answered and need explaining, please contact the following.

Worcestershire Breast Unit

Telephone - 01905 760261
Email – wah-tr.breastcarenursingteam@nhs.net

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.