

Nipple reconstruction after breast reconstruction



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Nipple reconstruction

Why consider nipple and areola (the coloured area around the nipple) reconstruction?

Nipple and areola reconstruction represents the final stage of breast reconstruction. This procedure is offered to patients who have undergone breast reconstruction.

It is usually postponed until six to 12 months after breast reconstruction or following completion of surgery to the other breast to allow any post-operative swelling to subside. The new nipple can then be positioned correctly on the reconstructed breast. Nipple reconstruction is however an optional procedure and patients who are happy with their breast reconstruction alone may decide not to have one.

The operation

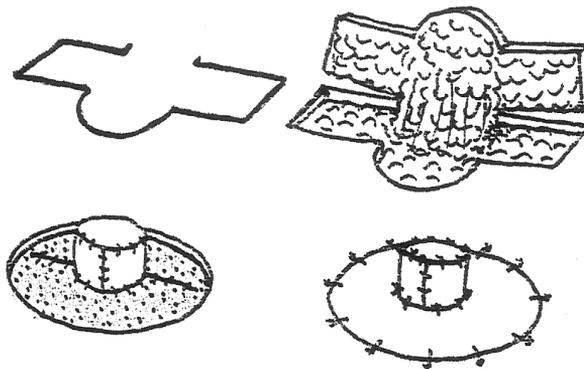
You will be asked to read and sign a consent form for the operation and have a chance to ask any remaining questions you may have. The operation can be safely performed as an outpatient day procedure under local anaesthetic and takes around 30 minutes. If you are having another breast procedure under general anaesthetic, the nipple reconstruction can usually be done at the same time.

You will be asked to come to the hospital on the morning of the operation and will be seen by the surgeon who will mark the position of the new nipple on the breast skin and make adjustments until you are happy with the location.

What does the surgery involve?

The type of surgery you have will depend on your preference and the surgeon's technique. Your surgeon will discuss with you the options, risks and benefits in order for you to make an informed decision. Nipple reconstruction can be safely performed as a day case procedure under local anaesthetic or general anaesthetic.

The surgeon will use some tissue, known as a 'flap' from the reconstructed breast and will stitch this together to form the projecting nipple. This will produce the nipple shape but the colour will be the same as the colour of the reconstructed breast. Sometimes your surgeon will use a nipple "sharing" technique where part of the other nipple is used to create a new nipple on the other side.



Are there any risks?

No surgery is free of risk, although this is a minor procedure there is a small risk of bleeding.

There is also a small risk of infection at the wound site; this can delay wound healing and a course of antibiotics may be required to clear the infection.

Sometimes the blood supply to the new nipple is not adequate and the tissue used to produce the nipple may not survive.

The nipple projection can flatten over time to some extent.

Tattooing of the nipple areola complex can fade with time and top-ups may be required to improve colour match.

After the operation

The wound will be covered with a special dressing to help prevent infection and to soak up any bleeding which may occur. The area should be kept clean and dry while the dressing is in place.

If you become aware of any change in the colour of the nipple, severe pain, swelling or redness you should contact your breast care nurse for advice. Pain relief is normally paracetamol and this should be adequate.

A follow-up appointment will be arranged for you one week after your operation to remove the dressing and check that the wound is healing properly.

Healing can take several weeks, but you should be able to resume your normal activities after a few days or as soon as you feel ready. Scarring may be quite visible for some time but this will fade over time. Massaging a moisturising cream into the area may help this.

Tattooing of the nipple areola complex

Nipple areola tattooing on to the skin can be performed following a nipple reconstruction. This procedure is currently not available at Yeovil District Hospital but your GP can refer you to Bournemouth Breast Care Department for the procedure to be done on the NHS.

Alternatively nipple tattooing is available in private clinics in the local area. Information can be obtained from your Breast Care Nurse.

Stick on prosthetic nipples

A silicone stick-on prosthetic nipple is also available if you prefer not to have any more surgery. Prosthetic nipples are available from your Breast Care Nurse.

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If you would like this leaflet in another format or in a different language, please ask a member of staff.

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**Ref: 03-16-106
Review: 03/18**

