

*Where quality matters*Breast Unit  
Elective Care Centre  
Lower Lane  
Liverpool L9 7AL  
Tel:0151-529-4082

## Nipple Reconstruction

### Patient Information

## Nipple Reconstruction & Nipple Tattoo

The last stage of your breast reconstruction is to make a new nipple for you. The new nipple is made in two stages:

The new nipple can be formed using the skin on your reconstructed breast or by nipple 'sharing' technique from the other breast.

After at least a couple of months, this new nipple can be tattooed to colour match your other nipple.

### What is Nipple Reconstruction?

This is a relatively simple operation done under a local anaesthetic.

The skin on your reconstructed breast will be frozen by an injection of local anaesthetic, but you remain awake.

### Nipple-sharing

This involves removing part of the other nipple and grafting it onto the reconstructed breast, resulting in two smaller nipples of the same colour and texture.

Local anaesthesia is drug-induced numbness: it may be provided by an anaesthetist, surgeon or other healthcare professional, depending on the technique used.

Unfortunately, local anaesthesia can cause side effects and complications.

Side effects are common, but are usually short-lived: they include nausea, confusion and pain.

Complications are rare, but can cause lasting injury: they include awareness, paralysis and death.

### Benefits and risks

On the whole the nipple reconstruction with surgery is a very satisfying procedure and most women are pleased with the result.

- As in any surgical procedure there is a small risk of bleeding or infection.
- Very rarely the skin flaps may not survive resulting in loss of the nipple.
- It is very difficult to match the two nipples exactly and usually some difference persists.
- The nipple projection always flattens to some extent in time. Sometimes it can flatten significantly and may need reconstruction again.

If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your Consultant or a member of a team.

### What are the alternatives to this procedure?

#### Moulded plastic prosthesis

If you do not want further surgery, a very realistic nipple areola complex, matching with the other side can be custom-made as a stick-on prosthesis.

However sticking of the prosthesis can sometimes be tricky.

### Before the operation

The site of the new nipple will be marked before your operation and then the skin in

that area will be moved and readjusted to create the nipple itself.

This usually takes about 30 minutes, and is usually not too painful.

This will be done as a day case, and you can go home the same day after your operation.

Even though you were not put to sleep for this operation, we suggest that you arrange for someone to collect you if possible.

## **After your operation**

You will have a nipple guard and dressing covering the reconstructed nipple.

These dressings should be left in place until your clinic appointment which be arranged for 1-2 weeks after your operation.

There may be a slight oozing of blood from the area. Press gently with a piece of gauze for five minutes.

It will usually stop after about five to ten minutes. If bleeding continues contact the breast nurses for advice.

If you notice any change of colour in the nipple, severe pain, marked swelling or redness please contact the hospital for advice.

You will be offered pain-killers while in hospital and given pain-killers to take home.

Healing may take up to two weeks. The scars will be quite noticeable for between three and six months and will fade slowly over the next few months. After a nipple reconstruction you should be able to resume your normal activities within a few days.

## **Nipple Tattoo**

This procedure is performed approximately three months after the nipple reconstruction, as the scars from this need to settle down. This is done within the breast clinic.

The colour of the new nipple is matched with the colour of your nipple on the other breast.

A light dressing is put on the area following the procedure. You will be okay to go home the same day.

It is probably wise to have the rest of the day off, but you should be able to go to work the following day, although you will have a light dressing in place and you should keep this area dry for the two weeks

## **Further Appointments**

You will be given an appointment to come back to a follow up clinic 1-2 weeks following your operation, so we can check your progress.

## **Further Information**

### **Breast Care Nurse**

**Tel:** 0151 529 4082  
(24 hour answer phone)

**Fax:** 0151 529 0151

### **Breast Cancer Care**

**Tel:** 0808 800 6000  
(freephone)

**E-mail:** [www.breastcancer.co.uk](http://www.breastcancer.co.uk)

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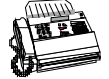
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