

Medical Micropigmentation (Tattooing)

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Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600



Author: Micropigmentation Clinician
Department: Burns and Plastics
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What is Medical Micropigmentation?

Medical micropigmentation is a procedure in which pigment is implanted into the skin via a needle to create colour. It differs from normal tattooing in that it does not penetrate the skin as deeply as tattooing and the pigments are specially designed for the part of the body being treated. It can be used to give colour to the nipple and areola following reconstruction. It can also add re-pigmentation to areas due to alopecia or other skin conditions such as scarring.

What does it feel like?

This varies considerably for different people depending on the area and size of the area to be treated. A topical (local) anaesthetic will usually be applied prior to the treatment. Some describe a “prickling” sensation. Many experience no discomfort at all. Scar tissue can sometimes be more uncomfortable.

How long does it take?

This varies considerably depending on the location and size of the area to be treated. Treatment may take up to 2 hours. Surface anaesthetic is applied 1 hour before the start of the procedure. The colour to be used will have been selected and the area to be coloured will be marked using a small brush and the chosen pigment colour. You will be able to check the position in the mirror. The colour is built up over 2 or 3 sessions depending on the area to be treated and the way the body accepts the pigment. Scar tissue tends to accept the pigment less readily than ordinary skin tissue. Colour fading is quite common and follow-up treatments may be required to maintain the chosen colour.

What should you expect after?

The area treated will look very dark in colour initially. There will be redness and possibly some swelling. After approximately 7 days the area will heal and a paler, more natural colour will be left.

Appointments

Day	Date	Time	Clinician

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This will continue to fade over the next 6 weeks when a new appointment should be made for your next treatment (you can lose 40%-80% of the colour in the first week).

For the first week avoid swimming in chlorinated water, direct sunlight and the use of cosmetics to the treated area.

Benefits of Micropigmentation

It can provide a more permanent aesthetic effect, removing the necessity for applying creams or prostheses each day. It may improve the appearance of scars and other skin conditions.

Consequences and Risks of the Procedure

Risks associated with the procedure are:-

- Not achieving an exact colour match
- Pigment spreading outside of the area being treated
- Uneven retention of pigment
- Allergy to the pigments
- Skin infection
- Scarring
- Allergic reaction
- Can accelerate shrinkage of the reconstructed nipple if treatment is carried out within the first 6 months.

The outcome

Is partly determined by variations in skin type and may be affected by:

- Medication
- Natural skin tones
- Alcohol intake
- Smoking
- Acidity of the skin
- Skin characteristics (oily/dry, sun damage, thickness)
- Individual healing ability

Assessment

An assessment form of your general health will be completed before beginning the procedure and you will be asked to sign a consent form that includes permission for photographs to be taken. These will assist the practitioner in your treatment and in recording and auditing outcomes. They will be confidentially stored and managed in accordance with Trust policy.

Aftercare Instructions:

Careful attention is now required to ensure the best possible result from your micropigmentation treatment.

Immediately Afterwards:

- **No** cosmetics to be applied to the treated area for at least 7 days
- If showering, avoid the water jets hitting the treated area and splash bathe only
- **No** soap or cleansers to be used until the treated area has created its own natural barrier
- Please keep the treated area dry for 24 hours (if you have a dressing this should be kept in place for 24 hours)
- Once the treated area is healed you may go out in the sun but a waterproof total sunblock should be used at all times
- Exposure to the sun over time will cause fading and colour change
- **Do not** pick or pull at the treated area as it will result in pigment loss

These instructions must be carefully followed to minimise the risk of infection or scarring.

Important note — colour will appear very intense immediately after treatment. This will fade rapidly after the first week and then continue to fade more slowly over the next 2-3 months.

MRI Scans

The pigments may show up as an artefact on the scan possibly due to iron content. Some clients may experience a tingling sensation. Please notify the radiologist before commencing any scan.

Further treatments (at 6 weekly intervals) may be required to complete the process and colour matching cannot be guaranteed due to body and climatic changes.

A follow up appointment will be made after your final visit, it is important that you keep this appointment. Photographs may be taken to allow further assessment of the micropigmentation. You may contact the department at any time with any queries.

Alternatives to Micropigmentation

The main alternatives to micropigmentation would be:

- Skin camouflage
- Custom made silicone prostheses

The use of **skin camouflage** creams may be suitable for skin conditions such as vitiligo or for camouflage of scars.

Custom made **silicone prostheses** may be useful where a nipple has not been surgically reconstructed, therefore providing the nipple projection. These are made to match size, shape and colour of the existing nipple/areola and are usually supplied with a medical grade adhesive.