

Recovering after a nipple reconstruction

This factsheet explains what you should be aware of following your nipple reconstruction procedure and who you should contact if you have any concerns.

Looking after your wound

Your reconstructed nipple will be covered with a dressing - please leave this in place until your first clinic appointment. You may shower briefly and pat your dressings dry. Usually your stitches will be dissolvable; your nurse will advise you if there are any stitches to be removed. If necessary, they will be removed at your outpatient appointment 2–3 weeks following surgery.

When your dressings are removed, they will be replaced with a foam donut-shaped dressing. This is to maintain the projection of your nipple and to avoid it being crushed in your bra. You can remove this dressing daily before your shower, pat the area dry and replace the dressing after your shower. Secure the foam in place with micropore tape at the top and bottom of the dressing with the hole over the nipple left open.

The dressings should be continued until your outpatient appointment approximately four weeks after your reconstruction. The dressings will be provided by your outpatient nurse. The same dressing can be re-used if it is not soiled.

Try to avoid rubbing or knocking your new nipple as it is very fragile. Do not be alarmed by the size of the nipple that has been created; often the reconstruction shrinks with time, so your surgeon may compensate for this by making the nipple large in the first instance. Avoid swimming until it is fully healed.

You may wish to have a tattoo around your nipple. If so, we will refer you to the tattooing service at your follow up appointment. The nipple needs to be fully healed before tattooing is performed, typically at least three months after reconstruction.

You should completely avoid using hot water bottles or heat pads on your nipple reconstruction, both during the healing stage and once the skin has healed. The skin may look normal, however there may be altered sensation in the area which can result in significant burns.



Possible complications

If you experience any of the following, please contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline or your clinical nurse specialist:

- Signs of redness or feeling generally unwell with a fever
- Odour coming from the wounds
- A burning sensation around the wounds
- Signs of swelling, bleeding, increased pain or increased fluid leakage.

Contact details

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Alternatively, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist if any problems occur or if you would like further advice:

Clinical Nurse Specialist, Plastic Surgery

Chelsea:	020 7811 8318	(NHS)
	0207 352 8171 ext 1573	(Private care)
Sutton:	020 7352 8171 ext 4345	(NHS and Private care)

