

Having a custom-made artificial nipple/areola prosthesis

Prosthesis Clinic

Information for Patients

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Introduction

A nipple prosthesis is an option for women usually after breast reconstruction surgery. This includes the areola which is the circular area of darker skin that surrounds the nipple.

Custom-made nipple prostheses are made out of silicone in a certain way to match your other nipple. The correct colour is achieved by using a colour matching machine.

What will happen during my clinic appointments?

No surgery is involved and you will normally need to have 2 to 3 appointments. You will see a trained member of staff (prosthetist) who will carry out the procedure and there may be a nurse or assistant also present.

Prosthetists are specifically trained to work with prostheses, such as artificial limbs and other body parts. A prosthetist in the Maxillofacial Service makes all nipple-areola prostheses. They are highly qualified and will be able to show you examples of their work before they start. Full details on the work of a maxillofacial prosthetist can be found at www.impt.co.uk

At your 1st appointment:

At your first consultation we will check you are suitable for this option. The procedure will be explained to you and you will be asked to agree to treatment. It is your choice if you choose to go ahead with this treatment option or not.

If you agree to proceed, your next appointment will be for a mould to record the size and shape of your nipple area.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

At your 2nd appointment:

You can wear any clothing, but a bra with no lace or detail over the nipple area would be best e.g. a sports bra. This will allow the prosthetist to take an accurate impression.

The prosthetist will take a shade of your existing nipple (if present) against colour silicone to get the best match.

Should both nipples need replacing a mould of each nipple may be taken before your surgery. If your surgery has already taken place your prosthetist will discuss size and shape with you and the prostheses can be made using stock moulds.

Further follow-up appointments:

Once your nipple prosthesis is ready, you will have an appointment to check the fit and we will go over how to wear, care and maintain it.

After you have been fitted with your new nipple prosthesis, you may be asked to return to clinic to review the fit and how you are managing with it. You can use this time to ask any more questions you may have.

If everything is fine, you will be given contact details and review appointments to check the quality of the prosthesis. Review appointments are usually every 18 to 24 months.

Fitting your nipple prosthesis

Different options for holding the prosthesis in place will be discussed with you at your 1st appointment:

If using a water based glue (adhesive) to hold in place:

Wash and dry your hands before handling the prosthesis:

- The prosthesis must also be clean and dry.
- Apply a thin amount of the supplied medical adhesive to the fitting surface of the prosthesis, using a cotton bud if needed. At first the glue will be white but will turn clear after a couple of minutes. Once clear, gently press the prosthesis into position.
- You may also add some edge adhesive or Vaseline on the fine edges to blend the prosthesis into the skin. Care must be taken not to apply too much adhesive as this will spill over the edges and spoil the look.
- Place the prosthesis into position using a mirror and view from the front and side.
- The position may change if you will be wearing a bra.

Supplies of medical adhesive are available from your prosthetist.

If holding in place by creating a vacuum:

Sometimes a small vacuum can be created to keep the nipple prosthesis in place:

- Apply a small amount of water or Vaseline around the edge of the prosthesis, then pinch the nipple before placing into position.
- Keep the nipple pinched and smooth the edges of the prosthesis in place.
- After releasing the nipple the prosthesis should have created a vacuum which holds it in place. If it has not, repeat the process.

Removing your prosthesis

To remove the prosthesis, lift the edge using a cotton bud, slowly work your way around and under the fitting surface, lifting away from the skin as you go.

When can I wear my prosthesis?

You will be advised on wearing the prosthesis. Usually it can be put on in the morning and worn throughout the day.

We advise that you do not sleep in your prosthesis as this is an opportunity to allow the skin to breath.

Cleaning your prosthesis

It is important to clean your prosthesis daily. If not kept clean, bacteria can grow within the silicone causing it to smell, change colour and reduce the quality of the material:

- Carefully clean your prosthesis with mild soap and water using a soft toothbrush or cloth.
- Extra care should be taken at the fine edges as they may tear.
- Rinse clean and pat dry with a tissue or towel.

Can I wear my nipple prosthesis when swimming?

Wearing a costume that is close-fitting and tight will help to keep the prosthesis in place. Rigorous swimming may cause the nipple to slip inside your costume/ swim wear.

Your prosthesis is made from a material called silicone. You may find that the chemicals in swimming pools have a bleaching effect over time on the silicone. If you go swimming you will need to rinse the prosthesis in clean water as soon as possible once you are out of the pool.

Where should I keep my prosthesis when I'm not wearing it?

When not in use, store the prosthesis away from direct sunlight in a container with a lid. Make sure the container is completely dry. Some people use an old make-up compact or a small plastic box with a lid.

How long will my prosthesis last?

The prosthesis will last between 12 to 18 months, but if it degrades before this time please call the maxillofacial department to arrange to see the prosthetist for a review.

A prosthesis can vary in life span due to many factors. Your prosthetist will be able to tell you when they think you need a new one.

A replacement prosthesis will be made for you when needed.

What should I look out for?

Stop wearing your prosthesis if you notice any redness, soreness or itching due to the use of the prosthesis or adhesive, and contact the Prosthesis Clinic for a review.

What should I do if I have a problem?

If you have any problems with your prosthesis, please contact the service on the telephone numbers below for help and advice (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm):

Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery: 0116 258 5671

Maxillofacial Laboratory/ Prosthesis Clinic: 0116 258 5255



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