

Breast Reconstruction Second Stage (Step 2)

Information for
Patients & Family

Expander Removal, Implant Placement
and/or Nipple Reconstruction & Areola tattoo

UBC Hospital

2211 Wesbrook Mall
Vancouver BC V6T 2B5
Tel: 604-822-7986

General Information

Breast reconstruction usually has 2 to 3 steps.

- Step 1:** make a new breast mound
- Step 2:** remove expander, insert implant, and/or create a nipple
- Step 3:** colour (tattoo) an areolar (the circle around the nipple) a few months later

In step 2, the surgeon makes the nipple from the reconstructed breast or sometimes from the other breast. At this time, the surgeon may also

- a) replace the expander with a permanent implant (after tissue expander reconstruction)
- b) smooth the wound line in the stomach area if necessary (after TRAM flap reconstruction)
- c) improve the shape of the breasts by removing fat (liposuction)

Expander Removal and Implant Placement – Step 2

The expander is removed and the implant is placed under your chest muscle. You will have a general anesthetic. This surgery takes about 1 hour or it may take longer if a nipple is reconstructed. You may leave the hospital 2 to 4 hours after the surgery

Nipple Reconstruction

You will have a general or local anesthetic. The surgery takes about 1 hour. If you have a general anesthetic, you may leave 2 to 4 hours after surgery and sooner after a local anesthetic. It will take a few weeks for the reconstructed nipple to heal.

How do I care for the wound?



Leave the dressings around the nipple for 5 days after the surgery. If you have other dressings on your breast or stomach, you may remove those 4 days after the surgery.

Leave the Steri-strips on until they fall off. Keep all dressings dry. If they become wet, replace them with clean dressings. These are available at any pharmacy.

If the wound(s) starts to bleed after you are home, press firmly on the area for a few minutes. If the bleeding does not stop after pressing for 10 minutes, call your surgeon or go to an emergency department.

There may be some bruising, tenderness, swelling, slight bleeding and scabbing around the wounds. These are normal signs and will improve over time. Put polysporin ointment on the wounds if scabbing occurs.

Pain at home

You will be given a prescription for pain medication. If the pain is mild to moderate, you may prefer to take plain or extra strength Tylenol. If you have pain, it is important to take the medication every 4 hours. But do not take more than the number of Tylenol recommended on the bottle.



The prescribed medication may cause constipation. If you become constipated, ask your pharmacist to recommend a mild laxative or stool softener. To prevent constipation, eat a high-fibre diet (fruits, grains, vegetables) and drink plenty of liquids.

Bathing at home



Avoid tub baths until the dressings are removed. You may shower after all the dressings are removed. After the dressings have been removed, keep the wounds clean by showering every day. Gently pat the wounds dry with a clean towel, **do not rub** the area.

Clothing

- ◆ Until your wounds heal, wear a stretch bra or sports bra that fits loosely.
- ◆ When the dressings are off, wear an underwire bra for three weeks.

Other: _____

Activity/Exercise

You may do your normal exercise and activities after surgery but do not swim until the wounds have healed.



Follow-up appointment

Contact your surgeon's office to make an appointment for 10 to 14 days after your surgery.



Call your surgeon or go to the nearest Emergency Department if you have any of the following:

- ◆ bleeding that does not stop after pressing firmly on the area for 10 minutes
- ◆ chills and/or fever of 38.5°C (101°F) or higher
- ◆ increased pain or swelling of the breast
- ◆ nausea and vomiting that does not stop
- ◆ wound/breast redness or a pus-like (yellow or green) drainage

Areola Tattoo - Step 3

About 3 months after the nipple is reconstructed, the areola is tattooed to create a circle around the nipple to match your other areola.

Local anaesthetic

If you have had local anaesthetic injected into the area, it will remain 'frozen' for about 1 hour after your procedure. If there is any discomfort after this time, you may take plain Tylenol.

Care of your new Tattoo

Leave your 'Tegaderm' dressing on for 5 days. You may shower and gently pat the area dry after the shower. It is normal to see some colour (pigment and blood) from the tattoo showing through.

After 5 days you may peel the dressing off in the shower using mild soap and water. Do not rub the area. Gently pat the area dry and put *Nivea* lotion on the site.

Apply the lotion 2 times a day to keep the scabs moist until they all peel off. This takes 1-2 weeks. Do not pick at the scabs, as you may remove some of the pigment, which will result in a lighter coloured area.

For 2 weeks do not soak your tattoo in the tub, hot tub, swimming pool or salt water. Do not expose it to sunlight or tanning beds.

Long term care of your tattoo

Sun, sun lamps (tanning beds) and chlorine will fade your tattoo over time. It is important to always cover your tattoo or apply sunscreen to protect it.

3 Months after your tattoo:

Your tattoo may look too dark at first, but it will fade over the next few months. It will take about 3 months for the final colour to emerge.



Call your plastic surgeon if you notice any of the following:

- ◆ New drainage, green/yellow or foul smelling drainage from the tattoo site
- ◆ Increased heat and tenderness around the site
- ◆ Increased pain or swelling around the site
- ◆ A temperature of 38.5°C (100.5°F) by mouth

Breast Reconstruction Website:

www.vanhosp.bc.ca/breastreconstruction

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