

Nipple Reconstruction

Nipple reconstruction following a breast flap following a mastectomy is considered the final necessary step to achieve a restored natural appearance to the breast. However, this totally depends upon personal choice and how a woman may perceive herself to be **normal** psychologically, in relation to body image and self-esteem.

What is a nipple reconstruction?

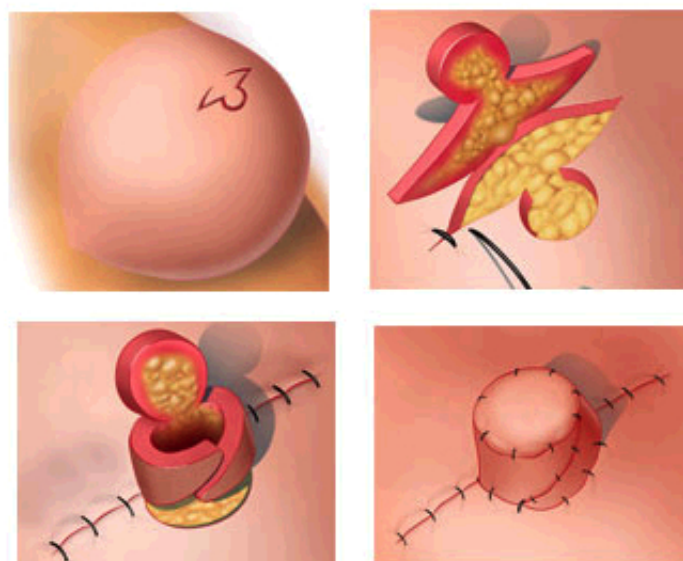
Making of a false nipple following a breast reconstruction is normally done about 3-6 months after the original operation giving the reconstructed breast a chance to settle and heal into its final shape.

How is the nipple made?

The type of surgery depends upon the technique of the Plastic Surgeon. The surgeon will use tissue and skin known as the flap from the reconstructed breast and stitch it together to form a projecting nipple, as shown in the diagrams below.



Nipple Reconstruction: CV Flap



Are there any alternatives?

There are alternatives. If you do not wish to have any more surgery, a silicone stick-on prosthetic nipple can be custom made as an exact mould of your original nipple and areola.

(A separate information leaflet is available in the hospital on prosthetic nipples.)

What are the risks?

No surgery is risk free, but problems can be minimised by good patient care and communication.

Risks can include:

- bleeding.
- infection.
- nipple necrosis (lack of blood supply to the nipple)
- there is also a risk that the nipple projection may flatten, and further surgery may be needed to get the desired effect and result.

The operation

You will be asked to sign a consent form and are given the chance to ask any final questions you may have.

The operation is done under a local anaesthetic. You will be able to go home the same day.

The surgeon will mark up the position of the new nipple until you are happy with the new location. The operation takes about 30-60 minutes and is pain free as there is little or no sensation in the area immediately post operation.

What happens after the procedure?

You will be asked to wear a sponge dressing in the shape of a polo ring over the nipple for 6-8 weeks; this will stop the nipple projection flattening.

A bra can be worn almost immediately after the operation (the polo ring must be worn at all-times); however, if you have any concerns or discomfort you can refrain from wearing it till you come back for your check up a week later.

Will I have much pain?

Most women have little or no sensation at this point. However, everyone has a different pain threshold; some patients may experience more pain than others. This is a fairly pain free procedure; however, if you have any discomfort, regular Paracetamol may be sufficient.

How do I care for my wound?

Upon discharge you will be given an appointment to see the Breast Nurse or the Plastic Dressing Clinic for a wound check. Until then keep the dressing clean, dry and wear the polo sponge dressing. Any stitches will be removed after 2 weeks

The nurse will advise you accordingly when to shower and how often you will need dressing changes.

When will I be able to drive / return to work?

You should be able to go back to work and drive a few days after the procedure.

Where can I go for help and advice?

If you experience any of the following problems:

- change in colour of nipple
- severe pain
- swelling or redness
- bleeding
- discharge

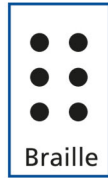
You can contact

- Kamal Paul, Clinical Lead Nurse for Plastics and Breast, on 0300 615 3031
- Plastic Surgery Dressing Clinic on 0300 615 3031

For specific advice, email and send photos to fhft.plasticsurgentcare@nhs.net

Alternatively for general advice call your GP or the NHS 1111 service.

For a translation of this leaflet or for accessing this information in another format:



Please contact (PALS) the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on:

Frimley Park Hospital

Telephone: 0300 613 6530

Email: fhft.palsfrimleypark@nhs.net

Wexham Park & Heatherwood Hospitals

Telephone: 0300 615 3365

Email: fhft.palswexhampark@nhs.net

<p>Frimley Park Hospital Portsmouth Road, Frimley, Surrey, GU16 7UJ</p>	<p>Heatherwood Hospital Brook Avenue, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 7GB</p>	<p>Wexham Park Hospital Wexham Street, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 4HL</p>
<p>Hospital switchboard: 0300 614 5000</p>		<p>Website: www.fhft.nhs.uk</p>

Title of Leaflet	Nipple reconstruction				
Author	Kamal Paul, Clinical Lead Nurse for Plastics and Breast				
Ref. No	T/021/5	Issue Date	May 2022	Review Date	May 2025

Legal Notice

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible. Please therefore always check specific advice or any concerns you may have with your doctor.

Committed to excellence

Working together

Facing the future