Nipple Reconstruction

On your breast, the colored area around your nipple is called the areola. Your nipple and areola are normally removed in a total mastectomy. The last steps in a complete breast reconstruction are to make a new nipple and areola. These steps are most often done in the Plastic Surgery office treatment room, but may be done during surgery if other procedures are needed at the same time.

The following information will tell what you can expect and how you can prepare for a nipple reconstruction.

How is it done?
Nipple reconstruction is done about 3 months after your breast reconstruction. You should wear a loose fitting shirt the day of your procedure.

Your doctor will inject numbing medicine into your skin where the nipple will be made. Your nipple is made using skin on your new reconstructed breast. Your skin is lifted and folded in a way that causes it to project outward, making it look like a natural nipple.

Your new nipple will heal in about 1 month. Once your new nipple has healed, your breast is ready for the new areola. Your doctor will talk with you about the ways your new areola can be made.

Care Instructions After Your Nipple Reconstruction
It is important to wear your dressing, or bandage, for 2 days after your surgery. Do not remove your dressing until day 3.

Starting on day 3, change your dressing each day or if it gets wet or soiled. Take the dressing off when you shower or bathe. To decrease the risk of infection, it is better to shower than take a tub bath. Let the water run over your nipple. Do not scrub or rub your nipple. Gently pat your skin dry. It is better to take a shower, rather than a tub bath, to keep the area clean.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Keep a dressing on your nipple for a total of 14 days. Use antibiotic ointment on your nipple each day for 5 days.

Your dressing will have an opening in the center to prevent pressure on your nipple. To change your dressing, follow these steps:

1. Wash your hands with warm water and soap. Dry with a clean towel.
2. To make a new dressing, cut a hole in the center of a stack of gauze (4 to 5 4x4 squares of gauze).
3. Remove the dressing from your skin.
4. If needed, put antibiotic ointment on your nipple.
5. Place the new dressing over your nipple. Use a solid 4x4 square of gauze on top.
6. Tape the dressing to your skin.

Call the plastic surgery office at (614) 293-0223 if you have any questions or any of the following problems:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- New or increased pain at the nipple site
- Drainage or pus from the nipple site
- Signs of infection, including redness and skin that is hot to the touch
- Darkening or change in color