

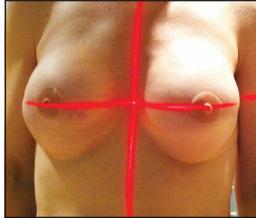


**Lankenau Medical Center**  
Main Line Health

## Areolocation and 3-D Nipple/Areola Tattooing

### What is areolocation?

Areolocation is the precise positioning of a new nipple/areolar complex. A high resolution laser light system identifies the ideal anatomic position. Latex nipples are then placed to confirm the best position, color and size. The goal is to achieve a natural and symmetrical look.



### What is 3-D nipple/areola tattooing?

3-D nipple/areola tattooing is a non-surgical way to recreate the appearance of a real nipple. In some cases, a surgeon may create a raised areola base and a nipple projection called a bumpout. Nipple/areola tattooing can be used to give color and enhance the three-dimensional appearance of a bumpout. If a patient does not undergo surgery to create a bumpout, tattooing offers a way to create a realistic-looking nipple/areola with the coloration and three-dimensional result customized for each patient.



### Who is a candidate?

These services are for patients who have had all or part of their nipples/areolas removed after various types of breast surgery, including mastectomy (whole breast

removal) with or without reconstruction; lumpectomy (partial breast removal); breast reduction; breast lift; and enhancement of prior nipple tattoos/pigmentation procedure.

### What is the value of nipple recreation?

Nipple recreation completes the breast reconstruction journey for patients both physically and emotionally, helping them feel more whole and confident.

### Where are these services offered?

These services are offered at Lankenau Medical Center in cooperation with an experienced tattoo artist who specializes in 3-D nipple recreation. These services are open to women and men regardless of where they had their breast surgery. Lankenau is the only hospital in the nation to offer this unique combination of areolocation and make available on site 3-D nipple/areola tattooing.

### When can I get my nipple tattoos?

Nipple tattoos can be done as soon as 12 weeks after your last surgery and 6 months after completing radiation therapy. All planned plastic surgical procedures should be completed prior to nipple tattooing, including tissue reconstruction of the breast mound, switching implants for tissue expanders, replacing ruptured implants, repositioning displaced implants, and creation of nipple bumpouts. It is never too late to get nipple tattoos. Many patients get nipple tattoos several years after their last breast surgery.

**To schedule an evaluation, contact Kimberly Ellis  
at 484-476-4888 or [elliski@mlhs.org](mailto:elliski@mlhs.org).**

### **What is the cost of areolocation and 3-D nipple tattooing?**

Consultation with a Lankenau physician for areolocation involves the standard physician consultation fee, which can be submitted to your insurance company directly. Tattoo artist Vinnie Myers is an independent contractor who is providing the expert 3-D nipple tattoo service at Lankenau Medical Center. He charges \$450 for one breast and \$700 for two. Mr. Myers will provide a paid invoice with designated billing codes, which patients can submit to their insurance company for reimbursement. There is no guarantee that any or all of the cost will be reimbursed, since everyone's insurance plan is different.

### **How long does it take to get nipple tattoos?**

It takes about two hours to tattoo two breasts. Even if one side is being done, it can still take up to two hours to match the new nipple/areola to the existing nipple on the other side. Patients are free to resume their day as normal following the tattooing.

### **Is nipple tattooing painful?**

The breast area is usually fairly numb after mastectomy and reconstruction, but the nerves may grow back and you may get more sensation over time. Between 3-6 months after surgery, there is usually minimal sensation. You will experience the vibration of the tattoo machine and you may also feel mild discomfort. The longer the interval since your last surgery, the more sensation you may have, and the more discomfort you may feel. More nerve endings are intact after lumpectomy (partial breast removal) and after breast reduction or lift surgery.

You may experience more discomfort during the tattooing under these circumstances.

Once tattooing is complete, most women experience no lingering pain.

Local anesthesia with injection or topical cream is not recommended. These medicines decrease blood flow to the area and can distort the skin where the tattoo needs to go, leading to suboptimal results.

### **How is the color and shape and size of the nipples selected?**

This is entirely up to you. The size of the nipple/areola is usually in proportion to the breast mound. Many patients wish to recreate the same nipple/areola that they had prior to surgery, but some patients choose to change this.

### **Can tattooing be done on thin or damaged skin?**

If the skin where the nipple/areolas are supposed to go is compromised, then it may be unsafe to get nipple tattoos. Tattooing needles go in and out of the skin rapidly. They penetrate about 1-2 millimeters into the skin and usually stay within the skin layer. Healthy skin can tolerate this procedure and heal completely in a short period of time. But delicate skin may have trouble with healing, infection and retaining the pigment. This may include individuals with areas of thin skin and delayed healing after mastectomy/reconstruction and/or radiation

### **Can the tattooing puncture my implant?**

It would be extremely rare for the tattooing needle to puncture an implant. This would only happen if the skin is very thin and if the implant is directly under the thin skin. The needle only goes 1-2 millimeters within the skin.

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## Examples

### 3-D tattoos on bumpouts

Even with a surgical nipple bumpout, coloration of the nipple and areola are usually necessary in order to achieve a natural nipple appearance.



### 3-D tattoos without bumpouts

Many patients choose to have only a 3-D nipple tattoo to recreate the natural appearance of the nipple (without additional surgery). Patients who have had radiation therapy following mastectomy and reconstruction may be more inclined to avoid additional surgery and its associated risks.



### 3-D tattoos to fill in pale areas of the nipple areola

Some patients who had lumpectomy may have lost all or part of their nipple/areola in order to fully remove the breast cancer. Some patients may lose color or part of their nipple/areola after a breast lift or reduction surgery. These patients may seek new nipple tattoo reconstruction or partial nipple restoration to fill in the missing part.



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## Examples

### 3-D tattoos to define and darken prior tattoos which have paled

Some patients who had nipple tattoos in the past may experience fading or asymmetry of the nipple/areola color, size and shape. They may choose to undergo another procedure to enhance the color and improve the size and symmetry.



### 3-D tattoos to distract from scarring

High quality 3-D nipple tattoos can greatly improve the overall appearance of the breast reconstruction by providing a primary focal point. They can distract from and forgive any flaws or suboptimal results, such as asymmetric breast mounds and scars. The good news is that the scars will eventually fade and symmetrical placement of the nipple tattoos can make the breasts look more even.



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