



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Instructions for After Your Nipple and Areola Tattoo Procedure

This information explains how to care for yourself after your nipple and areola tattoo procedure. Your areola is the circle around your nipple.

1 to 2 days after your procedure

- Your physician assistant or nurse practitioner placed a Tegaderm™ plastic dressing over your tattoo right after your procedure. Leave this dressing on for 2 days.
- You can shower as usual with your dressing on. It's waterproof.
- Fluid may collect underneath your dressing. This is normal.

2 days after your procedure (in the evening)

Take off your Tegaderm dressing in the evening, 2 days after your procedure. For example, if you get your tattoo on a Monday, take off your dressing on Wednesday evening.

- Take off your dressing in the shower. The warm water loosens the adhesive (sticky part) of your dressing, making it easier to peel off.
- After you take off your dressing, gently clean the tattooed area very well with warm water and mild soap.
- If scabs have formed on the tattooed area, do not peel them off. This can pull away the ink on your tattoo. Leave the scabs alone. They'll heal and fall off on their own.
- After your shower, gently pat the tattooed area dry with a clean towel. Leave your tattoo uncovered and open to air overnight (do not put a dressing over it). You can wear loose-fitting clothes to bed. Do not wear a bra to bed.

3 to 14 days after your procedure

- Start applying a mild moisturizer (such as Palmer's® Cocoa Butter) to the tattooed area once a day. Use only a small amount (about the size of a grain of rice). Do this every day until your skin is fully healed and no longer flaking or peeling. This often takes about 10 to 14 days.
- After the top layer of your skin flakes off, your tattoo may look lighter in color. Your skin also may feel dry for a few weeks while it heals. The true color of your tattoo will show through again after about 8 weeks (2 months).

General care guidelines

- Do not go swimming or soak in a pool, bath, or hot tub until your tattoo has fully healed. This often takes about 2 weeks.
- For 2 weeks after your procedure or while there's scabbing, do not do any activities that make you sweat. This includes exercise.
 - If you're in physical therapy, it's OK to keep going after your procedure.
- Your tattoo is an open wound, so it's important to protect it while it's healing. Keep it away from pet hair and places that are dusty, dirty, or messy. It also helps to sleep on clean sheets.
- Wear soft, loose-fitting clothes that will not cause friction (rubbing) or put pressure on your tattoo while it's healing.
- Most people do not have any pain after their nipple and areola tattoo procedure. But if you have some discomfort, taking an over-the-counter pain medicine can help. Examples of over-the-counter pain medicines are:
 - **Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or extra strength acetaminophen (Extra Strength Tylenol®).** You can start taking acetaminophen a few hours after your

procedure. Follow the instructions on the medicine's label or from your PA or NP.

- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil® and Motrin®) and naproxen (Aleve®).** You can start taking an NSAID 2 days after your procedure. Do not take it any sooner, because it can raise your risk for bleeding. Once you start taking the medicine, follow the instructions on the medicine's label or from your PA or NP.
- It's safe to have magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans and other imaging tests done after your tattoo procedure.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- A fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- Pain at or around the tattooed area.
- Redness or warmth at or around the tattooed area that's getting worse.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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