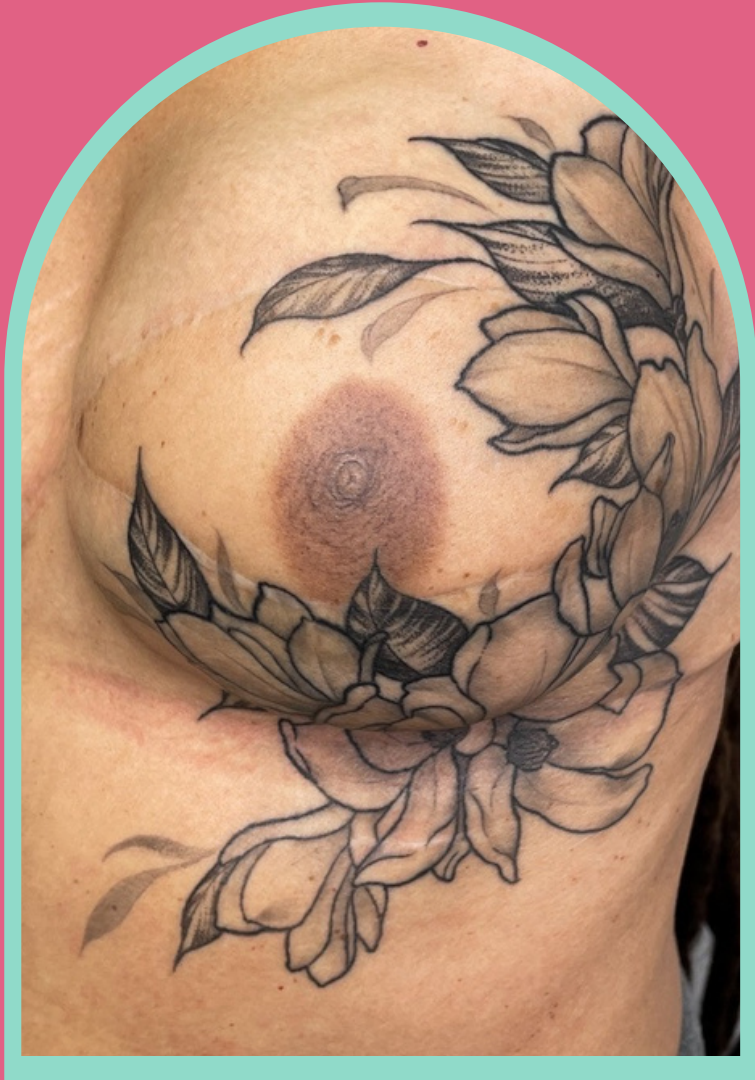


MASTECTOMY TATTOOING ALLIANCE



**A helpful guide to areola tattooing after
mastectomy surgery.**

Registered Charity No: 1201141



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Our founder and MTA Artist, Tanya Buxton, has written this helpful booklet to guide you through the areola tattoo process and answer your FAQs.

If you have any further questions regarding areola tattooing or making an appointment for an MTA funded clinic, please contact your chosen MTA Artist directly.

What is Areola Tattooing?

Areola tattooing, also referred to as Medical Tattooing, is a highly specialised tattoo. Small sterile needles and high-quality tattoo machines are used to gently implant ink into the top layers of the skin to create a beautiful, realistic areola.



Tanya Buxton



Mastectomy
Tattooing
Alliance

ABOUT THE MTA

The Mastectomy Tattooing Alliance (MTA) is a registered charity founded by Tanya Buxton in 2021, created to help support breast cancer survivors reclaim their bodies after mastectomy surgeries.

The Mastectomy Tattooing Alliance are dedicated to making areola tattoos more accessible, by providing funding and connections to experienced artists. As well as improving the information and education available for this wonderful form of tattooing.

Whether you choose to decorate your skin with a beautifully crafted tattoo design or a natural, realistic 3D areola tattoo, the empowering possibilities through tattooing are endless. Unfortunately, these options are not always accessible for everyone after their surgeries and treatments are complete.

Tattooing can be expensive and finding the right artist can feel like an overwhelming task. This is why the Mastectomy Tattooing Alliance plays such an important role within the breast cancer community by providing funding and connections to those who need it.

We are focused on raising awareness of the options available to survivors and making these tattoos more widely available for the breast cancer community.

OUR FOUNDER

Tanya Buxton



Tanya Buxton began her career in tattooing in 2009 and specialises in all forms of Cosmetic, Medical and Traditional Tattooing. She works closely within the breast cancer, BRCA and transgender communities, offering her services from Paradise Tattoo Studio in Cheltenham, which she owns, as well as various hospitals and clinics across the UK.

Tanya's passion for tattooing, and in particular Areola Tattooing, has been the inspiration behind creating the MTA with one mission in mind; to help more breast cancer survivors feel like themselves again.

Since founding the Mastectomy Tattooing Alliance in 2021, her drive and dedication has grown us into the charity you know today.

Instagram: @tanyabuxon

FAQ'S



WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT MY APPOINTMENT?

We recommend speaking with your chosen MTA Artist about what to expect at your appointment at their location. Consultations are always a great way to meet your artist prior to your appointment and discuss any questions you have in detail about your areola tattoo.

Appointments take between 1 – 3 hours depending on the type of tattoo(s) you are having done.

Colour swatches are done on the breast area to establish a suitable colour palette for your skin tone and desired look. For a unilateral mastectomy the natural areola is matched as best as possible in appearance, placement and colour. For a bilateral mastectomy placement, shape and size are discussed and drawn on to compliment the breasts and create balance and symmetry.

Once the design prep is complete, you will be laid back comfortably on the tattoo couch and the process will begin. Full aftercare advise will given by your artist once your tattoo is complete.



WHY DO I NEED TWO APPOINTMENTS?

An 8-10 week follow-up appointment is recommended for most Areola Tattoo treatments. This allows the artist to see your healed results and make any final refinements needed to your areola tattoo. Tattooing scarred or damaged skin is a delicate process and it is important not to overwork the skin as this can cause further trauma. Performing two shorter sessions is a more manageable approach to areola tattooing. Your follow-up session will also give you the opportunity to make any adjustments to colour, shape and detail should you wish.



HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO WAIT AFTER SURGERY BEFORE I CAN GET MY AREOLA TATTOO?

Tattooing before the scar tissue has had time to mature can result in further trauma and damage to the skin, and poorly healed tattoo results.

If you are unsure if your scarring is fully matured, seeking the advice of your consultant, surgeon or medical professional is also recommended.

Mastectomy Surgery:

When tattooing over scar tissue, particularly surgical scars, it is important to wait until the scar tissue has fully 'matured'. We recommend a minimum wait time of 12 months after mastectomy surgery and/or breast reconstruction (or until the scarring and skin is settled and matured) before tattooing can be safely and successfully performed.

Nipple Reconstruction:

In order for the nipple reconstruction to fully heal and the scar tissue to mature, a minimum wait time of 12 months (or until the scarring and skin are settled and matured) before tattooing can be safely and successfully performed.

Chemotherapy:

Breast cancer treatments such as chemotherapy weaken the immune system. Healing a tattoo puts strain on your immune system so it is important to let your body fully recover physically before having an areola or mastectomy tattoo. We recommend a minimum wait time of 12 months after chemotherapy treatment before tattooing can be safely performed.

Radiotherapy:

Radiotherapy not only weakens the immune system but also weakens the skin structure, resulting in thin and sensitive skin layers. It is vital that the skin has sufficient time to fully recover from radiotherapy before tattooing the area to ensure the skin is not damaged further. We recommended a minimum wait time of 12 months (or longer if the skin is still recovering) before areola or mastectomy tattoos can be safely performed.



HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO WAIT AFTER SURGERY BEFORE I CAN GET MY AREOLA TATTOO?

Tattooing before the scar tissue has had time to mature can result in further trauma and damage to the skin and poorly healed tattoo results.

If you are unsure if your scarring is fully matured, seeking the advice of your consultant, surgeon or medical professional is also recommended.

Gender Affirming Mastectomy Surgery:

Recommend wait times can vary depending on the type of surgery and incision site. If your incision scars are on or near the area to be tattooed, a minimum wait time of 12 months (or until the scarring and skin are settled and matured). If the incision scars are not on or near the area to be tattooed, a minimum of 6 months' wait time is recommended. Your MTA Artist can advise in more detail.

Gender Affirming Nipple Grafts:

Nipple graft tissue and scarring can take longer to fully mature, so a minimum of 12 months is recommended before tattooing can be safely and successfully performed, Nipple graft tissue can take up to two years to fully settle and mature.



Tanya Buxton



WHY USE PERMANENT INK FOR AREOLA TATTOOS?

At the Mastectomy Tattooing Alliance, we feel it is important to offer people a permanent and realistic tattoo option for areola tattoos. Our ethos is that the skin should be respected and areola tattoos should be built to last whilst ensuring the skin is treated with care and kept healthy.

For many people, having their areola tattoo is the final chapter in their healing process and marks the end of their journey, be it from breast cancer, transitioning or cosmetic enhancing. Having to revisit that period of time in their life with long term, regular 'top up' appointments is not a suitable or sustainable approach, not only physically on the skin but emotionally for the client.

Permanent tattoo inks are produced to extremely high standards and go through rigorous health and safety checks and testing to ensure they meet UK, EU and international safety standards. They come in a huge variety of colours and tones, and are designed to be more stable in the skin, meaning they stay true to colour and fade very little as your skin ages over time.

Areola Tattooing performed by Cosmetic Tattoo Artists and Medical Professionals; often referred to as 'Medical Micro-pigmentation' is typically done using 'semi permanent' pigment. Using this type of pigment to produce 'semi-permanent' results is NOT safe or suitable for areola tattooing.

Semi-permanent results mean regular 'top ups' are required and over time this has a negative impact on the skin, not to mention a person's well-being. Repeatedly disrupting the already delicate skin and scarred tissue (from surgery) can result in further damage being done to the skin, which can lead to more scar tissue being created and will cause poor healed results of your tattoo.



WILL A PERMANENT TATTOO AFFECT MY BREAST IMPLANT?

No, once you are fully healed from surgery (a minimum of 12 months is recommended) it is perfectly safe to have a permanent tattoo over breast implants.

Tattoos are placed in the top layers of the skin (dermis layer), implants are beneath several more layers of dermis, and sometimes fat and breast tissue, etc. Tattoo needles do not go into these deeper layers of the skin during a tattoo, so they will not interfere with and kind of breast implants.

It is important to visit a professional and experienced tattoo artist for an Areola Tattoo or a Traditional Tattoo design to ensure the tattoo is executed safely and to a high standard. Inexperienced artists could damage the skin and produce poor quality tattoos.



CAN I HAVE A TATTOO IF I'VE HAD NIPPLE RECONSTRUCTION?

Absolutely! Areola tattooing works perfectly alongside nipple reconstruction to create a natural and 3-dimensional areola-nipple complex.

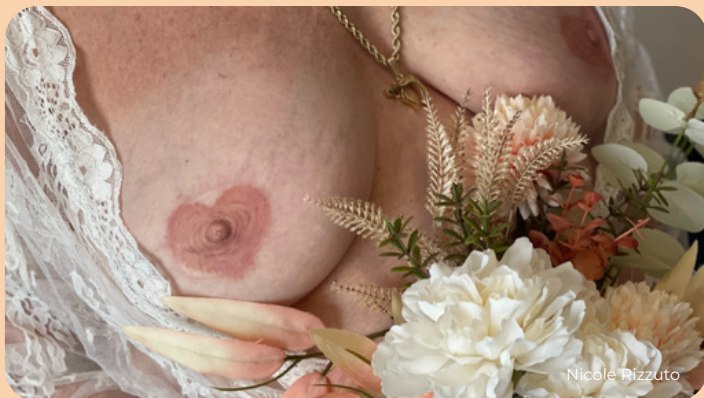
Once the skin is fully healed after nipple reconstruction surgery, areola tattooing can be used to add shape, enhance colour and create a more 3D effect.





DOES IT HURT?

The answer is YES and NO. Surgical incisions usually cause damage to the nerve endings in that area; meaning sensation and pain is minimal, if at all, during a tattoo. Any sensation that is felt is typically mild and completely manageable.



DO I NEED TO DO ANYTHING BEFORE MY APPOINTMENT?

The most important things to remember before your appointment are:

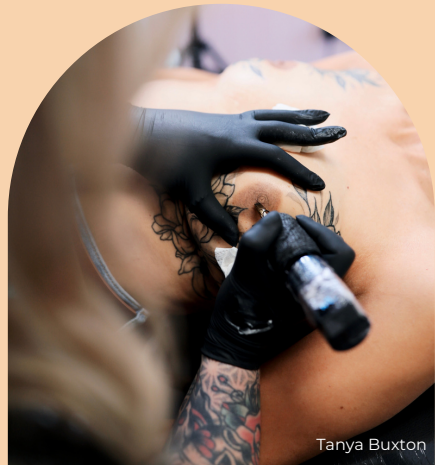
- Get a good night's sleep the day before.
- Make sure you are feeling fit and well.
- Eat a good meal at least 2 hours before your appointment.
- Avoid alcohol for 24 hours prior to your appointment.
- Avoid aspirin based medication for 48 hours prior to your appointment.
- Please also note you cannot be tattooed if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or taking antibiotics.

You are welcome to bring someone with you for support if you wish and we recommend wearing comfortable clothing to your appointment, along with a shirt, cardigan, or zip-up garment in case you wish to be more covered or feel cold during your appointment.



WHAT IS THE AFTERCARE?

After your areola tattoo is complete, the area will be covered in a sterile and breathable dressing. Your MTA artist will provide you with thorough aftercare advice and instructions for you to follow after your areola tattoo is complete. You will be able to go about your normal daily routines after your tattoo.



- It is important to keep the area clean and dry during the healing process.
- Swimming, heavy exercise, sun exposure, hot tubs, saunas, hot baths etc must be avoided until the tattoo is fully healed.
- The tattooed area may feel a little tender to touch for the first few days, this is perfectly normal.
- It is advisable to wear loose, comfortable clothing on the area during the healing process.
- The healing cycle is usually between 7-14 days, however, the skin will continue to settle for a further 4-6 weeks. This is why your follow up appointment is 8-10 weeks after your initial tattoo, as it allows the scarred skin plenty of time to rejuvenate and heal completely.

HOW TO BOOK AN APPOINTMENT

If you would like to book an MTA funded appointment with one of our MTA approved artists - you can contact an artist directly via our website by clicking on the [Artist Directory](#) or by filling out our booking enquiry form [here](#).

Our artists' locations, portfolios and specialities are listed within their profiles so that you can select the most convenient place to be tattooed.

Once you have selected your chosen artist, please send them an email directly via the email address listed in their profile.

You can include a summary of what tattoo you are looking for, i.e. a 3D areola tattoo, or a decorative mastectomy tattoo design.

Our artists will then happily respond and take the next steps in booking your appointment.



TESTIMONIALS



"I want to send a huge thank you to Tanya for doing my tattoo. I have just been away on holidays and I used to feel really self conscious in a bikini, worrying that everyone could notice that I only had 1 boob! But now all I notice is people looking at my tattoo, it is like magic.....the great art of distraction!"

NERYS

"Nicole's talent is next level. She brings together her skills and medical knowledge and makes absolute magic. She is lovely and comforting and her studio is calm and relaxing. An incredible gift to be able to create something that can help make women feel more comfortable in her skin. I am grateful for sure. Highly recommend Nicole if this is something you are considering."

MELANIE



"Wow this beautiful soul has changed my life with my areola tattoo and I can't stop smiling, I feel so much more confident and complete. She's so friendly, professional and shows great passion for the work she does for us wonderful ladies. She's compassionate, caring and made me feel at total ease with my procedure."

SASHA



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