You may have a nipple tattooed on your breast after your breast reconstruction. This handout tells what to expect before and after your procedure.

**What to Expect**

Nipple tattooing can be done about 3 months after your breast reconstruction. The tattooing is done by a plastic surgery physician assistant (PA) in the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC). The procedure usually lasts 1 to 2 hours.

**At the Hospital**

Before tattooing starts, you will receive an injection of numbing medicine.

You and your PA will decide the best size and placement for your areola (the small circle of darker skin around the nipple). Then, the PA will blend tattoo ink to match the color of your natural nipple and areola.

If both your breasts have been reconstructed, the PA will choose an ink color that looks natural with your skin tones. Your PA will apply color to your breast(s) with a tattoo machine and needle.

Most of the time, 2 tattoo visits are needed for best results. These visits will be at least 1 month apart. You will have a final follow-up visit with your surgeon after your tattooing is complete.

**After Your Tattoo**

- You will have a dressing (bandage) over your tattoo after the procedure.
- Your PA will give you instructions on how to care for your tattoo.
- You may have some light bleeding and scabbing for up to 1 week.
- Do not take a bath, go swimming, or soak in a hot tub until your tattoo area has fully healed.
When to Call

Call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217 and press 8 if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking or chills
- Any sign of infection near your tattoo site:
  - Redness or swelling
  - Pain that gets worse, or severe or ongoing pain
  - Bad-smelling drainage
  - A change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea or vomiting, or both
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217, and press 8.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the resident on call for your surgeon to be paged.