

WELLBEING

Body of Art

While tattoos can be a controversial subject, in the medical world they are changing lives for the better



New mum Katie Piper has plenty to smile about these days. As well as giving birth to daughter Belle in March, the TV presenter and campaigner has successfully rebuilt her life following a devastating acid attack in 2008 and, in the process, helped thousands of other people to also come to terms with facial disfigurement. In addition to offering support, her Katie Piper

Foundation puts those affected in touch with experts such as permanent cosmetics beautician Karen Betts, who promotes the life-changing benefits of medical tattooing.

"I pioneered permanent cosmetics here in the UK over 20 years ago," says Karen. "Since then, I've treated thousands across the country and numerous celebrities and clients worldwide. I'm

still leading the way when it comes to developing new treatments and products and I'm one of a very few elite artists in the UK recognised by the Society of Permanent Cosmetic Professionals in the US. I also support the Katie Piper Foundation, using my skills to help people living with burns and scars feel more confident about themselves."

Karen perfected the medical side of her

work while creating permanent and semi-permanent eyebrows and lip- and eye-liners for cosmetic purposes. She now specialises in re-creating lost pigmentation and facial features for victims of burns, accidents and cancer as well as those born with facial disfigurement.

She discovered cosmetic tattooing after working alongside a traditional tattoo artist in the early 1990s. However, it was only when a close friend lost her eyebrows while undergoing chemotherapy that she realised the medical possibilities of her work. Nearly 20 years later, she has six clinics around the UK and works with the NHS and The Haven in Leeds, which helps breast cancer sufferers, among others. She also runs the UK's largest training course so she can pass on her skills and expertise to others.

While cosmetic tattooing has received some bad press in recent weeks – with tales about overly large, very dark eyebrows or too obvious lines drawn around lips or eyes – in the hands of an expert, it can transform a face or body. Medical tattooing can re-create nipples lost after breast reconstruction following cancer, replicate the appearance of eyebrows after burns or surgery and rebalance a face by adding pigment to eyelids and lips for accident victims or people born with cleft lips. The transformative effect can give sufferers the confidence to face the world again, as Katie knows only too well.

"While having treatment for my own chemical burns, one of the things I discovered was medical tattooing," she says. "I started to realise that this was a cosmetic treatment that burns and scar patients are often not aware of and that can be difficult to get via the NHS. When I found out about medical tattooing, I thought, 'Great, it will give me back my expression, my smile, my eyebrows – restore normality.'"

Unlike traditional body art, a medical tattoo uses pigments formulated and crafted to mimic those found naturally in the skin and hair. You can choose either permanent treatments, in which the pigment is placed deep into the skin at around 2-3mm, or semi-permanent, where the pigment lies 0.5mm below the surface and will fade over a couple of years. This is often the best option for people undergoing chemotherapy, whose brows will eventually grow back, or for those wary of choosing a permanent effect. However, many women who have a semi-



Karen at work re-creating eyebrows for client Diane Ayre, who had lost her brows as a result of intensive chemotherapy (above and right). "She gave me back my confidence," says Diane

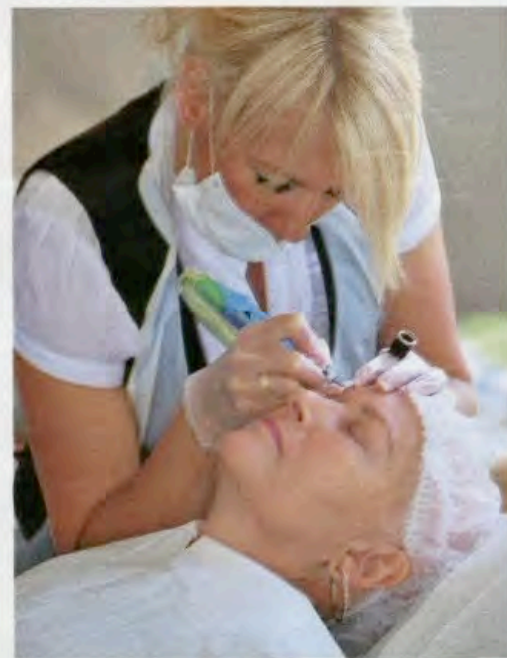
permanent medical tattoo will later return to have their features re-created permanently.

Through her charity, Katie now helps connect burns survivors with Karen and her teams for treatment and can even fund it for those in need of financial assistance. The foundation also runs workshops offering advice on camouflage make-up, hair and eyelashes.

"At the Katie Piper Foundation, we often meet burns survivors who would benefit from medical tattooing for their lips, eyebrows or eyes and we always refer them to Karen," she says. "It is very difficult to eradicate scars completely but there are things that can make you feel the best you can be and when you do that, you walk with your head held high and you feel confident." ❑

• To contact Karen and to see before and after pictures of medical tattooing, visit karenbetts.co.uk

• Further information and advice is also available at katiepiperfoundation.org.uk



HEALTH NOTES

Running tracks

Whether you're jogging for fun or training for a big race, music helps keep you moving – and for that you need earphones that stay in place. Denon AH-W150 Wireless Fitness in-ear headphones, £129.99, fit snugly around the top of your ear and into the ear canal to deliver great sounds for up to seven hours.

Sweatproof and super-light, they have Bluetooth connection, GPS tracking and a rechargeable battery. Available from Selfridges; visit selfridges.com



Smoothie moves Innocent has a new range of smoothies targeted at specific requirements: Antioxidant, with kiwi, lime and wheatgrass; Energise, which combines strawberry, cherry and guarana with flax seeds; and Defence, a mixture of mango with pumpkin and echinace. Innocent Super Smoothies cost £2.35.

Seeing sense Now you can have green eyes whatever their colour thanks to the new range of Eco frames at Optical Express. Made from 90 per cent recycled materials, they are super stylish, having been created by Italian eyewear designer Modo, a favourite with Leonardo DiCaprio and Hayden Panettiere. Prices start at £110 and Eco will plant a tree for every pair purchased; visit opticalexpress.co.uk

