

TAKE CARE OF YOUR SCARS

Scars are an unavoidable reality following a full thickness wound to the skin. They occur after accidents, surgery, or even infections, and are a permanent change in the skin, which can never be removed. You may be able to trade one scar for another more “attractive” scar, but it will be a part of you for a lifetime.

You may not be able to remove a scar, but you can influence its appearance. A variety of factors come into play that can ultimately affect the final appearance of the scar. Major factors, which you unfortunately cannot control, include the type of injury, location on the body, genetics and age. There are more factors, however, that you can influence. Taking advantage of good early healing with no infection or prolonged inflammation, scar massage, and protection from the sun can indeed improve the scar’s appearance.

Follow instructions on wound care given at the time of surgery, and allow adequate time for healing before pushing your body too hard. Clean wounds are good, but strong agents like hydrogen peroxide are actually bad for healing wounds. Elevation and ice may also help to reduce swelling.

A fresh scar will not have its ultimate strength for about 6 weeks, so during this time be gentle when it comes to activities. A fresh scar will appear pink or red, and will become firmer to the touch over the next several months. It is during this time that you can impact the appearance. A sign that a scar has “matured” and has its final appearance is when it turns white. This typically takes about one year and this mature scar is the one you will keep.

We recommend the following to make your scar look as nice as possible:

- 1) Mederma is a gel that comes from onion skin, and it acts as a natural anti-inflammatory. It needs to be massaged into the scar three to four times per day from the week the stitches are removed until the scar turns white.
- 2) Silicone Gel Sheeting is a rubber pad that is placed over the scar and worn for up to 24 hours per day. This is a very effective form of scar care, and helps significantly with the itching that can be uncomfortable during the healing phase. The sheet can be cut into different shapes and sizes, and is held in place on the scar with either paper tape or clothing (such as a bra after breast surgery). Each piece can be used daily for at least one month. A 14.5 cm. X 12 cm. sheet costs approximately \$60.00 and specially designed anchor shaped sheets for a breast reduction or mastopexy run \$42.00 each.
- 3) Embrace is a specially designed silicone gel that has an adhesive and is placed under tension to help pull the edges of the wound together during the healing phase. Each strip can stay in place for about a week, and use is recommended for approximately 8 weeks after your scar is healed. These are particularly useful after abdominoplasty, brachioplasty, thighlifts, and scar revisions in areas that notoriously heal with keloids or hypertrophic scars. A box of 4 strips is approximately \$150.00
- 4) BioCorneum is a gel that is 100% silicone with a SPF 30 UV protection and dries to form a transparent, flexible sheet. It is water resistant and reduces redness and discoloration. It will also

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flatten and soften raised scars. It is ideal for the face and other areas that are exposed to the sun. Makeup can be applied after the product dries.

- 5) Sunscreen is essential for fresh scars on exposed body parts. A scar can easily burn and the redness may stay much longer if exposed to the sun. Use a SPF greater than or equal to 15. We have sun block here in the office. Elta MD carries a variety of excellent alternatives.
- 6) Broad Band Light and ProFractional Laser- Light and laser treatments help to reduce color and blend the texture of the scar. These procedures are typically performed in a series, and can either be done starting early (a few weeks after your procedure) or on mature scars (a year or more) that could benefit from a cosmetic improvement.

The care of your scar should start as soon as the incision is healed and it is in the first 6 months that you can influence the final outcome of the scar. As us for advice on your particular scar and if you think things are looking worse rather than better as time goes by, be sure to come back and have things checked.