

Occupational Therapy Scar Care

Information for patients, carers
and relatives



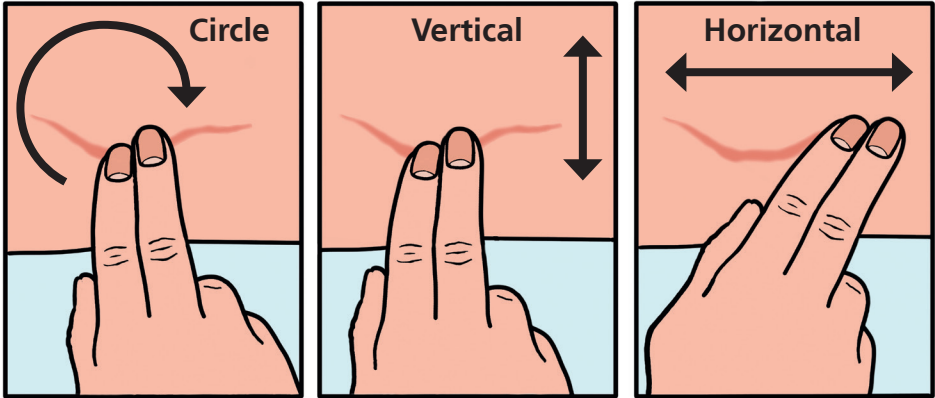
Following an injury or an operation you might develop a scar. This leaflet explains how scars are formed and what you can do to help.

How are Scars Formed?

- Scars form as a result of the natural healing process of the skin.
- Sometimes, as a scar forms it becomes hard, red, raised and thick.
- It may adhere (stick) to underlying tissues and it may itch or be sensitive to touch.
- Scars which run across or close to a joint may limit movement (for example bending your elbow or knee).
- Everyone's skin is different and some people are more prone to problems with their scars.

What is Scar Massage?

- Scar massage is a treatment to improve the look of your scar and reduce any pain or soft tissue adherence (sticking).
- The following massage techniques can help to soften the scar tissue and make it flatter, paler and smoother.
- Massage can be started once all stitches are removed and the wound is fully closed (stitches removed and all scabs naturally fallen away).
- It may take several months to achieve a flat and moveable scar.
- A scar can take up to 18 months to mature fully.



- Use an un-perfumed moisturising cream or lotion (e.g. Aveeno, E45, Nivea, Vaseline Intensive Care, or bio-oil).
- Massage the scar and any tight or hard areas lying close to the scar.
- Start with small circles along the length of the scar either with your thumb or first two fingers.
- Begin with a light pressure, progressing to deeper and firmer pressure, as you can tolerate.
- Next, work vertically (up and down) along the length of the scar.
- Then work horizontally across the scar, to and fro in small movements.
- You should do this for at least 10 minutes, 2-3 times a day.

Stop massaging and contact your GP or Consultant if you experience any of the following: redness, bleeding, the scar feels warmer than the skin around it, more pain than usual at the site of the scar, no improvement in your scar following 3 months of treatment.

Sun Exposure

- Scars are extremely sensitive to sunlight.
- Exposure to the sun without sufficient protection will mean scars burn easily and could cause long term damage, darkening the scar which could be irreversible.
- We recommend a high factor sun cream with both UVA and UVB protection on scarred areas for two years post injury and also covering them with clothing where possible to increase the protection.

Further information

- For further information and advice please look at the following website:

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Scars/Pages/Treatment.aspx



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