

# Occupational Therapy Scar Care

Information for patients, carers  
and relatives



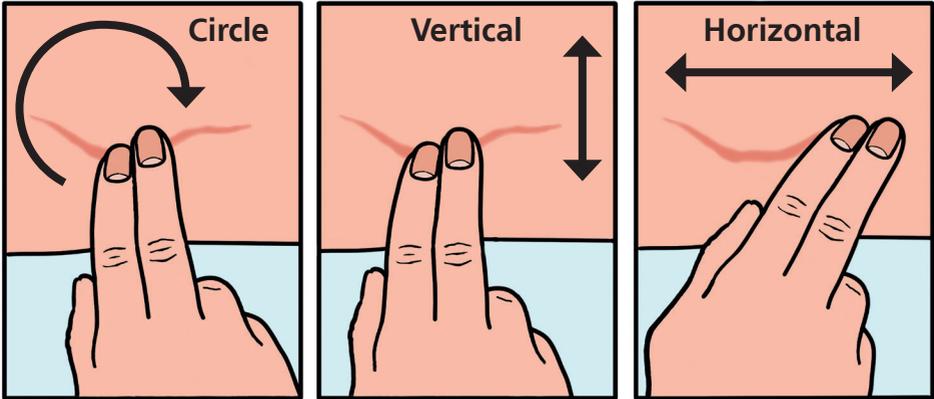
Following an injury or an operation you might develop a scar. This leaflet explains how scars are formed and what you can do to help.

## 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](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Scars/Pages/Treatment.aspx)



### What did you think of your care?

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© The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 1st edition (Ver 1)  
Developed by: Claire Forsyth - Occupational Therapist  
Produced by: Medical Illustration Services  
MID code: 20220421\_011/MH

LN005261  
Publication date  
07/2022  
Review date  
07/2024