

Scars and Healing

How to care for your scar

This handout explains what scars are and how to treat them.

What is scarring?

Scarring occurs as skin heals after it has been damaged. Scars may appear as marks or raised areas on the skin. Scars may be raised (*hypertrophic*) or may grow outside the original scar area (*keloids*). Many things affect the scarring process, and we cannot predict exactly how scarring will occur for a certain person. While we cannot guarantee how your scar will heal, there are things you can do to help improve the scarring process.

Massage

Massage uses both pressure and ointments for healing. Studies show that firm pressure may be the most important healing factor in scarring. Doing massage along with ointments can be used to improve healing. Ointments include:

- Aquaphor
- Eucerin
- Cocoa butter
- Aloe
- Silicone gel

We suggest starting massage treatment about 4 weeks after your surgery, when your incision is fully healed and more stable. Massage the area with ointment 3 times a day for 10 minutes each time. Do this for several months.

Silicone

Studies show that using silicone (in gel or sheet form) helps reduce the appearance of scars. It is used on closed, healed incisions to manage existing scars. For best results, keep silicone sheets or gel on the skin for 12 to 24 hours a day for 2 to 4 months.

Silicone Adhesive Sheets for Body Scars

Silicone adhesive sheets are soft, self-adhesive dressings that are used for body scars. They can be cut to fit your scar. You may use paper, Medipore, or Hypafix brand tape to keep these sheets in place as needed.

Remove the silicone sheet when you shower. Clean the silicone sheet with soap and water and then reuse it. Replace it with a new one after 2 to 3 weeks, or when it no longer stays in place.

You can buy these dressings online. Search for "100% silicone sheets" as these work best.

Check with your health insurance company to see if they cover the costs of these silicone sheets. The diagnosis codes are:

- L91.0 for hypertrophic or keloid scar
- L90.5 for scar condition

Cimeosil Topical Scar Gel for Facial Scars

For scars on your face, use Cimeosil topical scar gel. You can buy it online at www.cimeosil.com.

The 14 gram tube can last up to 90 days when used every day on a scar that is 3 to 4 inches long. You can put the gel under makeup and over sunscreen. Use the gel until your scar turns pale and no longer changes color when you apply and remove pressure.

Sun

- Sunlight can either darken or lighten a scar.
- To help keep your scar from changing color, protect it from the sun:
 - Use sunscreen with SPF of 30 or higher.
 - Cover your scars with sun-protective clothing.
 - For head and neck wounds, wear a hat or scarf or other clothing over the wound while it heals.

Nutrition

To heal, your body needs protein, vitamins, and minerals. These nutrients are especially important to the healing process: vitamin C, zinc, and iron.

Questions?

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

During Clinic Hours (Monday through Friday except holidays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.):

If you have any questions or concerns, we recommend messaging your surgeon through EPIC MyChart. Please include a photo if it would help explain your concern.

Alternatively, you may call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206.598.1217 option 2.

Urgent Needs Outside of Clinic Hours:

If you have an urgent care need after hours, on weekends, or holidays, please call 206.598.6190 and ask to speak to the plastic surgeon on call.