

Scar Care After Surgery

Benefits of Scar Treatment

A scar forms from the natural healing process that occurs in response to an incision placed during surgery. Scar tissue goes through phases of healing and can often appear red or mildly elevated during this natural process. Scars can be improved by topical products and scar massage. Caring for your scar can help improve its appearance. Patients with a higher risk of abnormal scarring include those with previous history of hypertrophic or keloid scars or patients with darker skin pigmentation. In addition, incisions in higher tension areas or over parts of the body that engage in repetitive movement may result in widened or unsightly scars.

How to Manage Your Scar

Patient participation is critical in achieving an optimal scar. Scar management occurs once your incision is sufficiently healed. This usually happens 4-6 weeks after surgery. Optimal scar management includes a silicone-based product (silicone gel or silicone gel sheets), scar massage, and sun avoidance. Scar management is most effective in the first year following surgery.

Silicone-based products

Silicone-based scar gel can be applied over scars twice daily. Alternatively silicone gel sheets can be applied over scars for 12-24 hours per day. Silicone-based products increase hydration and oxygen levels in the skin, thereby promoting favorable scar formation. These products can be found on Amazon or at a drugstore in the band-aid section)

Scar Massage

Scar massage desensitizes the area and reduces scar tightening. Scar massage can begin 4 to 6 weeks after surgery and should avoid any open part of the incision (open wounds). When performing massage, rub in a circular motion on and around your scar. Use firm, even pressure for 2-3 minutes. Perform this 2 times a day. Dr. Tanna recommends using a silicone-based scar gel or moisturizing lotion while massaging your scar to decrease friction at the area.

Sun Avoidance & Sunscreen

In the first year following surgery, ultraviolet radiation from sun exposure can cause your immature scar tissue to become darker than the surrounding skin. This hyperpigmented scar may remain darker than the other skin. To help prevent this, Dr. Tanna recommends that all patients use a sunscreen when outdoors and avoid prolonged exposure to the sun. This is especially true for new scars (that are readily exposed to sunlight). The SPF (Sun Protection Factor) should be 30 or higher and preferably waterproof. Physical sunscreens (zinc, titanium etc.) are thought to be better than chemical sunscreens. Follow the application directions on the bottle or tube.

Suture Extrusion (“Spitting Sutures”)

As your incision heals, it is normal to have some minor redness, swelling, itching, skin irritation, drainage, and/or small lumps in the skin near the incision. If you notice a small suture poking through the skin, try to gently remove it with scissors or tweezers. You can also come to our office so Dr. Tanna can remove it. A spitting suture is a dissolvable suture under your skin that is rejected by your body before it can completely dissolve. These spitting sutures can cause swelling, redness and/or oozing at the incision. This is normal and will eventually go away on its own.