

Scar Management

Information for patients and parents/carers

Scar Process

A scar can develop as part of the healing process. Scars can take up to 2 years to fully mature. If a wound has healed within 2 weeks it is unlikely to scar, it may remain pink for some time, but this will gradually pale over several months. If a wound has taken longer than 2 weeks to heal or required a skin graft, there is an increased chance of developing scarring.

Once the wound is healed, there are treatments to help improve the appearance and prevent the scar tissue from sticking to the underlying tissue.

Sometimes scarring can cause problems such as:

Hypertrophic Scarring – are a result of an imbalance in the production of collagen during the healing process. Often red / purple, raised, firm and itchy but they do not extend beyond the original boundary of the wound.

Keloid Scars – are an overgrowth of tissue that occurs when too much collagen is produced during the scarring process. Causing the scar, to continue to grow even after the wound has healed. A keloid scar can appear raised, pink, red, skin-coloured or darker than the surrounding skin.

Contractures – causes skin to tighten making it difficult to move which is especially an issue over joints.

It is important to treat such scarring due to a number of associated factors:

- The appearance of scars can be quite upsetting to some children and young people and may prevent them from engaging in certain activities.
- Scars over joints can become tight and prevent or limit movement.
- Scars can be sensitive and become dry and itchy.
- Scars can become painful, tight and uncomfortable.

Treatment

There are several treatments we would use for scar management:

- Moisturising
- Massage
- Silicone sheets and gels
- Pressure garments
- Splints
- Exercises

Splints

Splints may be used to protect, support or immobilise an injured or inflamed part of the body. This will also prevent contracture (tightening of the skin), deformity and loss of function.

Exercises

You may be given some suggested exercises, the aim of which is to maintain or improve the function of the body part, encourage normal development or increase or maintain the range of motion, this will also gently build strength and tolerance of the use of the body part.

Moisturising

Scars require regular moisturising to prevent the area from drying, cracking and becoming sore. It is important to use a non perfumed, oil-based moisturising cream i.e. zerobase, E45, Nivea (perfumed creams can react with newly healed/sensitive skin). Moisturiser should be applied gently, in thin layers and should be applied 2-3 times a day. It is important to cleanse the area between applications to avoid a build up of cream and irritate the skin.

Massage

Massage can help to soften and flatten scar tissue and help control itching and the sensitivity of the scar. When a scar has matured it will become paler, flatter and softer. Massage using gentle circular motions with the pad of your thumb or finger on the scar. As the scar matures, you can increase the pressure of the massage.



The following treatments for scar management will be discussed with you by the physiotherapy team, who will create a plan specific to the individual patient, therefore please use these as directed by your clinician.

Silicone gel or sheets

Silicone acts by sealing in moisture and hydrating the scar. The aim of silicone is to flatten, soften and pale the scar and reduce any discomfort. This is used in two forms:

Silicone gel should be applied to the scar twice daily, before application the scar should be cleaned as normal. If continuing to apply moisturising cream, allow this to fully absorb before applying silicone gel. Once the silicone gel is applied allow it dry for a few minutes.

Silicone sheets should be cut to size to cover the scar. They should be worn for at least 12 hours a day or as directed by your clinician.

Pressure Garments

Pressure garments are made to measure elasticated pressure clothing fitted accurately to apply constant pressure to the scarred areas with the aim to achieve scars that are flat, soft, pale and comfortable. The garment should be worn up to 23 hours a day unless otherwise advised. They should be removed for bathing and moisturising.

Pressure garments work by applying appropriate levels of pressure to the scar, aiming to restrict blood flow/reduce scar inflammation and inhibit growth of hypertrophic scar tissue using constant compression on the area. The garment is used until the scar has matured. The garment will be measured regularly to ensure it continues to fit well.

Sun Protection

As scars are extremely sensitive to sunlight/sun exposure, it is important they are protected from the sun. Sun cream protects the skin from harmful UVA and UVB radiation. The Skin Protection Factor (SPF) should be 30-50 with a UVA star rating of 4 or above. Sun cream should be reapplied every 2 hours and after exposure to water, sand, sweat or towel drying. Some medications can also cause photo-sensitivity, increasing the risk of burning. Extra care should be taken in the sun for the next 2 years.

Support

We may also refer you to the psychology team if you or your child is having anxiety about the incident or the resulting scarring/appearance from the wound.

Other resources you may find useful are:

www.changingfaces.org.uk/

<https://burns-club.org.uk/>



SCAN ME



SCAN ME

Contact Us

Plastic Dressings Clinic: 0131 312 0107