

SCAR MESSAGE EDUCATION

What is a scar? Scars result when the body repairs skin wounds caused by surgery, accident or disease. They are the natural result of the healing process. The longer it takes a wound to heal and the more damaged the skin, the greater the chance of a noticeable scar. The location on the body or face as well as the patient's age and skin type will affect the way a scar forms. Older skin tends to scar less visibly whereas younger skin tends to over-heal resulting in larger and thicker scars.

Why are scars visible? Mature scars become visible if they are raised, indented, or if they exhibit a different color or texture compared to the surrounding skin. Additionally, scars that cross wrinkles or natural expression lines will appear more visible because they neither follow a natural pattern nor look like a naturally occurring line.

Why do scars form? All skin wounds will result in a scar. When a skin wound occurs from surgery, accident or disease, the body will respond with normal wound healing, characterized by 3 sequential and overlapping phases.

Inflammation: In the first phase the body tries to heal the skin wound by a process of inflammation. During this time the scar will be swollen, tender and red. This phase can last up to two weeks.

Proliferation: In the second phase the body starts the skin repair process by depositing scar tissue within the wound. In this phase, which may last up to six weeks, the scar will become raised and hard as large amounts of collagen are being laid down within the scar. During the proliferation phase a scar is considered immature and is characterized by the three R's: red, raised and rigid.

Remodeling: In this third phase the body works on the scar to soften and flatten it. During this period the scar will become more mature as some of the collagen disappears. This phase can last from twelve to eighteen months.

How can I lessen my scar? Scar formation and scar maturation are ongoing processes. Scars continue to grow and change throughout the recovery process which may take from twelve to eighteen months. Scar massage is an effective way to decrease scar tissue build up and help make scars less noticeable. Massage will not help soften a scar more than two years old.

What is scar massage? Scar massage is one method of softening and flattening scars.

It works by:

- 1) Promoting collagen remodeling by applying pressure to scars
- 2) Helping to decrease itching
- 3) Providing moisture and flexibility to the scar

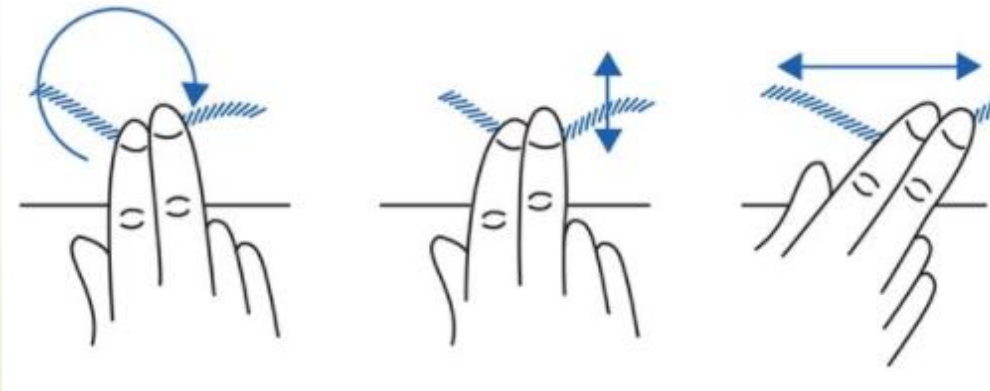
When should I start massaging my scars? 1 week after surgery.

How do I massage my scars? Use the pads or soft tips of your fingers to massage the scar and tissue around the scar. Massage in all three directions.

Circles: Using two fingers make small circles over the length of the scar and skin surrounding it.

Vertical: Using two fingers massage the scar up-and-down.

Horizontal: Using two fingers massage the scar from side-to-side.



How much pressure should I apply? You should apply as much pressure as you can tolerate without discomfort. Begin with light pressure and progress to firmer pressure as your wound heals.

Do I use any creams, oils? You may use Vitamin E, cocoa butter, aloe and lotion, DO NOT USE ANY "SCAR AWAY" products (i.e.; Mederma) This will weaken your incision.

How often should I massage my scar? Perform often, like a nervous tick.

How long is massaging necessary? Until you are pleased with results, typically at least 4-6 months following your surgery or injury.

Sun exposure risks? While your scars are healing, you should avoid sun exposure to avoid skin cancer and hyperpigmentation or darkening. Use sun block with an SPF of 35 or greater, and always wear protective clothing.