

This informational handout is intended for patients who want to do whatever possible to ensure that their scar will heal as nicely as possible. These instructions are only useful in scars that are early in the healing period. If your scar is already six months old or older, most of the points in this handout will not be very effective, but you should discuss this with your doctor.

The appearance of a scar is dependent on many factors. One of the most important factors is the type of skin that you have. In general, people with very light skin tend to form less scar tissue than people with darker skin types, and older people also form less scar tissue than younger people. This is not completely understood. If you have a history of forming thick or raised, red scars, you may be someone whose skin tends to consistently form more scar tissue. Scar formation also depends on where the scar is located. Thicker skin will usually form a worse scar than thin skin, e.g. skin on one's back forms thicker scars than skin on one's eyelids. The type of wound also plays a role. If there is a lot of tension or pull on the wound or if the wound gets infected, it may form more scar tissue. It's important to remember that once you have a scar, you can never completely get rid of it, but in many cases it can be made to look better. If your scar is not satisfactory after an adequate period of healing (usually at least six months) you should discuss this with your doctor.

The following will help you achieve the best results possible for your particular situation.

1. Avoid exposing the wound to sunlight until it is completely healed (i.e. is not red anymore) as sun exposure will cause it to become more red and may lead to a thicker scar. A high SPF sunscreen (50+) should be applied if sun exposure is anticipated.
2. Apply a silicone dressing such as Scarguard™, or any of a variety of silicone sheet "Scar Treatment" bandage (available at most drugstores) at night time to help flatten out and soften the scar. There are also liquid silicone gels that can be worn during the day if preferred.
3. Massage the scar with Vitamin E Oil, Mederma™, or other lotions to help soften the scar.
4. For some scars that tend to thicken, your doctor may suggest an injection of a steroid medication such as Kenalog™ directly into the scar to help prevent this from happening.
5. For scars that remain very red after several months, treatment with a laser may reduce the redness in some cases. This is not necessary for most scars as the redness is normal and will fade with time.
6. Patience is truly a virtue when it comes to dealing with scars because almost all scars will improve with time. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your scar.

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