

Scar Care and Management

Healing does not end with suture removal. All surgical incisions and wounds repair themselves with scar tissue. A scar is the body's "glue," and it is essential for normal repair after surgery. Incisions start as flat, fine-lined, and pink to red in color. However, over the first few months after your surgery, the healing process will change the appearance of your incisions. *It is normal for them to become darker red, raised, thickened, firm, sensitive, and itchy.* Usually, around three to four months after surgery, your scars will begin to flatten, lighten in color, and soften. It takes up to one full year for your scars to mature after your surgery. To minimize the appearance of your scar we suggest:

1. Moisturizer:

Chapped or dry scars can be a problem, so we suggest you use a cream-based moisturizer daily to keep the scar from drying out. Aquaphor or something similar works best, but you can also use any gentle and unscented lotion such as *Aveeno, Lubriderm, and Cerave.*

2. Sunscreen:

Incisions and wounds do not have the full protective features of uninjured skin. Sun exposure can thicken, darken, and permanently damage your scars. Therefore, it is essential to use a sunblock with an SPF of 45 or higher for at least one year after your surgery. If your incisions are on your face, wearing glasses and hats add another barrier of protection against the sun.

3. Massage:

Beginning at six weeks, or until cleared after your surgery, you can begin massaging incisions and the surrounding area. Gently massage in a circular motion with your fingertips several times a day, as tolerated. Using a moisturizer cream or vitamin E oil can help while massaging.

4. Silicone:

Scar products containing silicone as the main ingredient may help fade scars over time. Once your incisions have closed and you are cleared, begin to apply either strips or gel daily. Do not apply products to open wounds or if removable sutures are still in place. For optimal results, use consistently for three months. If you are prone to hypertrophic scars or keloids, continue therapy for up to six months. No literature has shown one particular product is best and results between patients are variable, but these are examples of products you can find online: *New Gel+, Biocorneum, Cica-Care.*

If abnormally thick, reddened, or painful scar tissue develops, further treatment may be helpful. Several effective treatments in selected situations include, laser treatments, injectable steroids, or scar revision surgery. If your scar does not seem to be healing as expected, you should call our office to schedule an appointment for an evaluation.