



POST OPERATIVE CARE

PATIENT INFORMATION

Wound Healing & Scar Management

SCARS

Despite the common misconception, no surgery, even plastic surgery, is possible without leaving a scar. The objective is to minimise how obvious the scar is.

The final outcome is reliant on several factors.

1. **Patient** - Age, skin type, racial differences, other medical conditions.
2. **Surgical** - Plastic surgical techniques can assist this through careful planning, meticulous repair and vigilant post operative care. The scar may be placed in less noticeable positions e.g. expression lines, behind ears or in natural body folds. The objective is a thin fine scar that is very difficult or nearly impossible for others to see.
3. **The nature and site** of the condition being treated.

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All wounds, whether surgical or traumatic, go through a process of maturation. At 6 -10 weeks the scar is often at its most red, tender and firm as the body remodels itself. Therefore, you often see the scar become more noticeable than when the dressings and sutures were first removed.

During this period of time, taping and/or massage can be beneficial.

Micropore (flesh coloured) tape is available at most chemists. It can be applied directly to the wound and left in place. You can shower with it on and pat it dry afterwards. The tape can be changed as required every few days. To have any real effect it needs to be used for at least 6 weeks.

Massage with moisturiser can also be useful. The moisturiser needs to be applied with firm pressure several times a day for at least 6 weeks. Vitamin E or sorbolene can be used for this. Some extra benefit may be garnered from silicone based products.

Silicone dressings/strips are available but in the majority of cases are not necessary and can be quite expensive. These are often used for difficult scar problems. A/Prof White will advise if they are required.

As the scar matures it will become softer, less red and less noticeable. This process continues for up to 12-18 months. The end result can take several weeks or months to arrive at. Protection from sunlight is also very important as scars mature. They are quite sensitive and can get sunburned more easily. This can result in long term discolouration of the scar.

In individuals with certain skin types (i.e. those that are very pale with red hair) and in children, the scars are redder and take longer to mature. Other skin types are more prone to making bad scars that may be thick and lumpy for the long term (e.g. African or Asian heritage). Other factors can also influence final scar result such as infections, scar locations and a patient's existing medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, steroid medications).

DO NOT SMOKE. Smoking is associated with a significantly higher risk of poor wound healing, both in the short term (wounds falling apart, getting infected, grafts and flaps failing) and in the long term with worse final outcomes.

Please note - This information sheet is provided as a general guide only. The specific circumstances of your condition need to be discussed with A/Prof White.