

Procedures

Scar Revision

What are the issues?

Whenever the skin is cut or damaged, it is likely to heal with a scar. Some people heal better than others and their scars are thinner and more subtle. However, it is difficult to predict who is likely to heal well and who will heal poorly. As a general rule, very dark and very fair skin types and red-haired individuals are likely to produce poor scarring known as hypertrophic and keloid scars.

What are the options?

It is never possible to completely remove a scar. In some circumstances, though, it is possible to significantly improve a scar by conservative or surgical means. Conservative measures include special gels, dressings, pressure garments and regular massage. Such treatments are slow to take effect and require a concerted effort to follow the advice given. Nevertheless, they can be highly effective. Most scars continue to improve for up to two years after they have formed and we may advise conservative treatment only during this phase of scar remodelling. A specific type of scar, known as a keloid, may benefit from injecting steroid into the scar tissue itself. Several such treatments may be required.

If conservative measures are not, or not likely, to be effective, we may improve the appearance of an unsightly or tethered scar using various plastic surgery techniques or with LASER. The surgical techniques involve removing the old scar and resuturing it. Sometimes, plastic surgeons use specialised techniques known as 'W' or 'Z'-plasties to reduce the tension in a scar and realign it. This maximises the aesthetic and functional result.

Which procedure is right for me?

Your surgeon will need to see and assess your scar. They will discuss with you what can realistically be achieved and which methods are most appropriate for you. It may be that the scar cannot be readily improved and we will advise you of this.

What are the limitations?

No scar can be totally eradicated; it can only be made more subtle. In some circumstances, we can achieve some improvement in the colour, position and the thickness of the scar, making it much less noticeable. However, it is not always possible to get a significant improvement. Your skin type, age, smoking status, genetic factors and prior sun exposure will all influence the final quality of the scar. Your surgeon will make you aware of the limitations with you at your consultation.

What are the risks?

If scar revision is performed surgically then, as with any surgery, there is a small risk of infection in the wound. In rare cases this can worsen the appearance of the scar. It is also possible that the scar will heal in the same way as before, with little or no significant improvement.

Most scars 'mature' with time. A fresh scar will appear hard and red and eventually become soft and pale. It is possible that your scar will look more noticeable following surgery before it has a chance to settle down. This process can take several weeks or months.

Injections of steroid into scars can help them flatten, soften and pale, as well as reducing itching. The injections may sting and be uncomfortable for the first 24 hours. There is a small risk that the injection will cause a scab to form on the scar. There is also a risk of a change in pigmentation and

thinning of the surrounding skin. This limits the number of injections administered to two or three. There is a possibility that the scar will not respond to the steroid or other treatments.

Silicone gels and ointments are usually very well tolerated. However, in rare cases they can cause mild irritation and may need to be discontinued.

What can I expect afterwards?

If you have had an operation, you may need to have stitches removed, as it is not always appropriate to use dissolving suture materials. The wound may be a little uncomfortable and simple pain killers are usually all that is required. You will be given an appointment to return for removal of the stitches and to see your consultant to monitor the progress of your scar.

If gels or special dressings have been recommended, then treatment tends to last three months or more. You will be given regular review appointments to assess your progress.

Contact Us

For information and appointments please contact us and we will be happy to help.

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