Occupational therapy

Care of your scar

What is a scar?
Scars are collagen fibres produced as a result of the body’s normal healing process. The amount of scar tissue produced by the body varies depending on the individual and type of surgery/injury.

Why is it important to care for your scar?
Initially scars can be firm, thick and red in colour (active phase) but over time soften and become pale in colour (matured). This whole process may take 12 to 18 months or more.

During the ‘active phase’ you can use treatments to influence your scar. Initially as scar tissue forms it is firm and tacky and can stick to structures around it; scar care helps to flatten, make it softer and reduces the chance of scar tissue sticking (adhesions).

Scar treatments
Self-management scar treatments include manual scar massage, vibration massage and silicone based products (such as gel, gel sheets or elastomer putty).

Manual scar massage

1. When can I start?
24-48hrs after your stitches have been removed, if the wound is dry.

If you have dissolvable stiches you start massaging your scar at approximately 12-14 days after your surgery, providing the wound is healed and dry.

2. What do I need?
You will need a basic, un-perfumed moisturising cream. For example aqueous cream or ‘E45 cream’ are ideal for massaging the scars.
3. Method
The scar massage needs to be in circular movements, on and around the scar line, to keep the skin moving freely. In the first few days you may only tolerate gentle massage but you should then aim to increase it to a deep and firm massage to reduce the risk of adhesions (see picture below).

You will be advised by your therapist as to how long you should continue with your massage.

Start date..........................

Repeat ..........times per day for approximately...........minutes, ideally before your exercises.

Vibration scar massage

1. What is it?
Vibration massage provides a deep massage that can help to remodel scar tissue and can complement your manual massage.

A mini massager may be used in your therapy session. If you want to use a massager at home you will have to purchase one. Alternatively, if it is comfortable, you can use the back of an electric toothbrush.

You will be advised by your therapist as to how long you should continue with your massage.
Repeat ..........times per day for approximately.........minutes, ideally before your exercises.

**Mini Scar Massager suppliers**

The following list provides details of some suppliers; however, this list is not exhaustive.

The price of a scar massager varies from approximately £20-£35 depending on the supplier:
- Boots the Chemist – Available in larger stores or on-line at www.boots.com
- Performance Health (www.performancehealth.com)
- Roylan Scar management (www.amazon.co.uk)

**Additional instructions**

If any of this treatment makes your symptoms worse, stop immediately and inform your therapist on; 01223 216769.

Therapist: ______________

**References/ Sources of evidence**


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