

Scar massage after breast surgery

Hands, Burns and Plastics Therapy
Information for Patients

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Introduction

You may be given this leaflet after a follow-up appointment after your breast surgery. You should not use this until you have been assessed and directed by your medical team. This is because aftercare guidance will depend on an assessment of your recovery.

How does massage help?

You will have a scar after your surgery. This is a normal part of your skin healing itself to close up your wound.

The time skin takes to heal can be different for everyone. It depends on the size of the wound and other things like age, smoking, infections and other health conditions which can sometimes slow it down. If a wound has taken a while to heal it can make a scar that has some problems. Some people will not have any problems with their scar.

Sometimes, scars can become thick, firm, lumpy, stuck down, tight and painful. This can make arm movement difficult. It can change how the skin looks and feels. Massaging the scar can help with these problems.

It is ok to do this massage if you have had a mastectomy, lumpectomy and if you have had any lymph nodes taken out. It can be helpful to do the massage before you do your arm exercises. If you have ever had a keloid scar then speak to your breast nurse first.

When do I start scar massage?

After your operation your breast consultant will tell you when it is safe to start massaging your scar. This is because your wound needs to be completely healed before massaging. The wound must be closed and dry. It must not have any leaking or wet areas. There should be no stitches and dressings on the area.

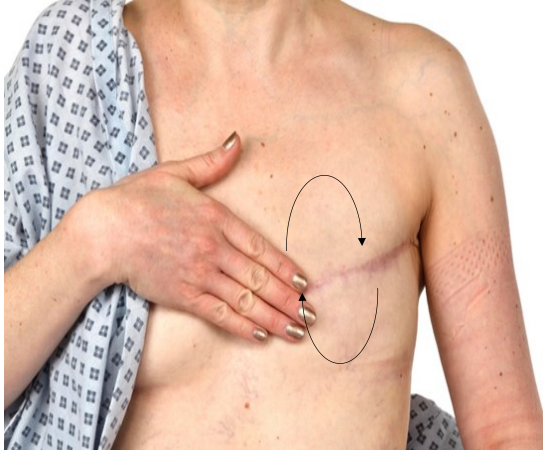
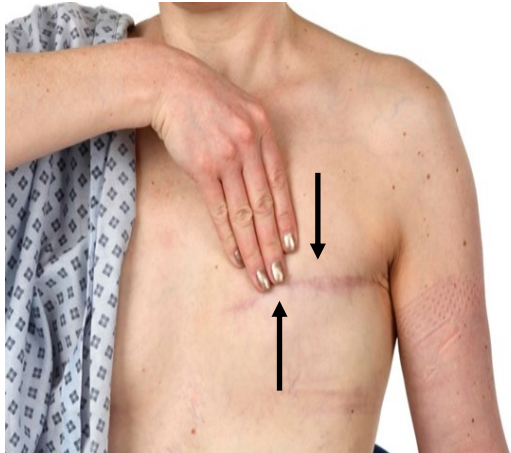
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How to do the scar massage:

Your consultant must tell you that you can start to massage your scar.

- Use a small amount of non-perfumed white moisturising cream like E45 when massaging.
- The massage should be **gentle**. It should **not** hurt or make the scar go red or sore.
- Try to massage your scar 2 times a day. Take 5 to 10 minutes doing this. This will help to move the scar. It will make it feel softer. It can also reduce any itching and dryness. It should help to make your scar feel better when you move your arm.
- **Do not massage** a wound that is not healed yet.
- **Do not** start the massage if you have had any problems like a fluid (seroma) or a bruising (haematoma) under your scar after your operation. Speak to your breast care nurse or consultant if you are unsure.

<p>1.</p> <p>Start from one end of your scar. Move your fingers in a circle as the arrows shows. Massage gently across the line of your scar to the other end.</p>		
<p>2.</p> <p>Start with your finger tips on your scar at one end. Slide your skin gently downwards and then upwards as the arrows show. Go along the line of your scar to the other end.</p>		

<p>3.</p>	<p>Start with your fingertips at one end of your scar.</p> <p>Gently slide the skin from side to side as the arrows show.</p> <p>Go along the line of your scar to the other end.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Do the same massage along your scar again as on the 3 pictures, but with your arm lifted comfortably up in the air. This will help to gently stretch your scar.</p> <p>Go into your armpit too if you have had any lymph nodes removed. Do some circle movements of the skin in your armpit as in picture 1 and up and down movements as in picture 2. This will help move any scarring inside the armpit.</p>	

How long do I keep massaging for?

It is a good idea to keep massaging your scar for at least 1 year after your surgery. This is to help keep it soft and loose.

If you have radiotherapy treatment later on then you will be given advice from the radiotherapy department about what massage to do during your treatment.



Moving and using your arm

It is best to do the exercises you have been given to do after your surgery. This will help to stretch your scar and to help you to move your shoulder.

To help you to get better it is good to use your arm for light activities soon after your surgery.

Start to do some reaching with your arm moving above your head. Do this from 2 weeks after your surgery. This can be reaching up into kitchen cupboards, pegging out laundry, taking clothes on and off over your head. This will help you to get back the movement of your arm. Your consultant will tell you if there is any reason you should not do this after 2 weeks.

Contact details

If you feel you are having any problems with your scar or with moving or using your arm then speak to your breast care nurse or your consultant. They can refer you to the specialist occupational therapists or physiotherapists and we can help you with this.

If you have any questions, write them down here to remind you what to ask:

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على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
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