

# Looking after your scar

## Occupational Therapy

Information for Patients

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### What is a scar?

Scar formation is a natural part of the healing process. It happens when a wound closes after an accident, surgery or disease. The time skin takes to heal varies. It depends on the amount of damage. The longer it takes to heal, the greater the chance of a noticeable scar.

### What is an abnormal scar?

Scarring is the final stage of normal wound healing and all wounds will form scars. However, not all scars will become abnormal scars. Normal scars will develop during the first 48 hours after wound closure and can fade within 3 months. Abnormal scars can sometimes form later. Scars resulting from surgery can become abnormal regardless of the skill of the surgeon. Abnormal scars are a red or pink colour, thick, lumpy and raised. They can be itchy or painful.

### Why do scars matter?

Scars can be uncomfortable and cause mental and emotional distress. Feeling self-conscious about a scar can cause feelings of embarrassment, anger, fear, anxiety and sadness. These are all normal emotions. In time, these should get less. If your feelings about your scar are stopping you from carrying out your normal daily activities you should talk to your GP.

### How can I improve my scar?

Once your wound is completely healed (the stitches have been taken out and the wound is dry) you will be ready to start gently massaging moisturising cream into your scar. Use non-perfumed cream such as Epimax or Nivea. Try to massage the scar 4 times a day. This will hydrate and soften the scar. It can reduce itching and dryness.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## How can silicone improve my scar?

If you are concerned about your scar, or your scar is becoming red and raised, using silicone products can help. They can also prevent abnormal scars forming. A variety of silicone gels are available, such as Kelo-cote, ScarSil, SilDerm, Dermatix, Pro-Sil Scar Stick and Bap Scar Care.

Information and prices are available on their websites:

[www.kelocote.co.uk](http://www.kelocote.co.uk)

[www.silderm.com](http://www.silderm.com)

<https://www.jobskin.co.uk/silicone-gel>

[www.bap-medical.com/bapscarcare](http://www.bap-medical.com/bapscarcare)

Larger pharmacies may also stock silicone gel products.

## What can I do if my scar is abnormal?

If your scar is becoming abnormal, your surgeon or specialist nurse can refer you to the Occupational Therapy (OT) Scar Management Service within the hospital. If the OT assessment says that silicone treatment would improve your scar, the OT Service can ask your GP to prescribe it.

## How can I protect my scar from the sun?

Scars burn more easily and will become worse after exposure to the sun. You should use a very high factor sun cream (Factor 50) or cover your scar when you are outside. Remember that the sun's rays are still powerful when it is cloudy.

## Are there additional services?

There are other services available to help improve the appearance of scars:

- Medical tattooing can enhance and add colour to the affected area and also soften scars.
- Skin camouflage can provide a temporary covering of your scars.

The options of these services will need to be discussed with your specialist nursing team as not all scars are appropriate for these treatments.

## Where can I find more information?

The following websites provide additional information that may be helpful:

[www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk](http://www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk)

[www.lets-face-it.org.uk](http://www.lets-face-it.org.uk)

[www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

[Breast reconstruction | Breast Cancer Now](#)

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

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