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CONSULTANT PLASTIC SURGEON

PATIENT INFORMATION

Acne scar treatment

CO2 laser, IPL and punch excision for acne scars

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Sevenoaks & Oxted

Version 1.0
October 2026

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This booklet explains acne scar treatment and what to expect.

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01 Why you have this booklet

You've been given this booklet because you have talked to Mr Kumar about treating acne scars, or you're about to.

It explains the different types of acne scar, the treatments, how to prepare, and the risks and recovery.

It won't answer every question, and it isn't a substitute for talking things through with Mr Kumar, so please note down anything you want to ask and bring it to your next appointment. There is space for your questions at the back.

02 What acne scar treatment involves

Acne can leave several types of scar, often on the same face. The right treatment depends on the type, so Mr Kumar looks closely at your skin and plans a combination that suits your scars and your skin type.

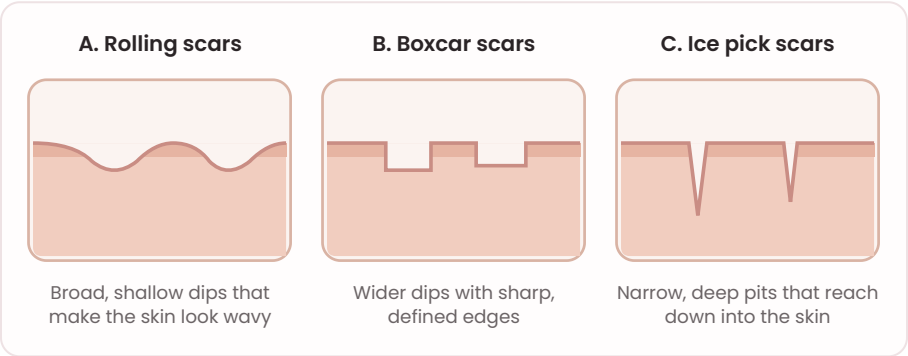


Figure 1. The three main types of acne scar, seen from the side. A simplified drawing for guidance only.

The red or brown marks that acne leaves behind are not true scars, but they often sit alongside them and can be treated at the same time.

CO2 laser resurfacing

A fractional CO2 laser treats thousands of tiny columns of skin, removing a fine layer and triggering new collagen. Over the following months the surface becomes smoother and the scars shallower. Usually one to three sessions, a few months apart.

IPL (intense pulsed light)

Light energy fades the redness and brown marks left by acne and evens out the skin tone, with very little downtime. Usually a course of sessions about four weeks apart.

Punch excision

Ice pick and deep boxcar scars are too deep for laser alone. Each one is removed with a tiny round punch and closed with a fine stitch, leaving a small, flat line that laser then blends in.

Combination treatment

Most people get the best result from a plan: punch excision of the deepest scars first, then CO2 laser a few weeks later to smooth the surface, and IPL for any redness.

03 Before you decide

You're likely to be a good candidate if:

- your acne has been under control for several months
- you have not taken isotretinoin (Roaccutane) in the past year, or Mr Kumar has agreed a plan with you
- you can protect your skin from the sun before and after treatment

- ✓ you have realistic expectations: scars become shallower and less noticeable, rather than disappearing

What the treatment won't do

- − **It won't treat active acne.** Spots need to be controlled first, with your GP or dermatologist.
- − **It won't make scars disappear completely,** although most people see a clear improvement.

Please tell Mr Kumar if you have, or have had

- you have taken isotretinoin (Roaccutane) in the past year
- you get cold sores
- you tan easily, have darker skin, or have had dark marks after injuries or previous treatments
- you use retinoid or acid creams, or have had peels or laser treatment recently
- you take blood thinners, or medicines that make your skin sensitive to light
- you are pregnant or breastfeeding
- a tendency to keloid or thickened scars

04 Other options

You don't have to have treatment. Depending on your scars, the alternatives include:

- Morpheus8 or microneedling, for milder rolling scars
- chemical peels

- dermal filler, for some rolling scars
- camouflage make-up
- doing nothing

05 What you can expect from the result

Results build gradually as new collagen forms, with the full effect three to six months after your final session. Most people see their scars become shallower and their skin smoother and more even. Deep scarring rarely disappears completely, and some people choose a further session.

06 Getting ready

Please:

- stop retinoid creams and exfoliating acids about a week before laser
- avoid tanning, sunbeds and fake tan for four weeks before treatment, and use sun cream of factor 50 every day
- take the antiviral tablets you are given before CO2 laser if you get cold sores
- use any skin-preparing cream you are given, if you have darker skin
- come with clean skin and no make-up
- arrange a lift home after CO2 laser on the face if you would prefer not to drive

07 Anaesthetic and where it happens

Numbing cream is applied about 45 to 60 minutes before CO2 laser. Punch excision is done under local anaesthetic, so you are awake and the area is numb. IPL needs no anaesthetic. Treatment takes place in clinic, and you go home straight afterwards.

08 The procedure

Your eyes are protected with shields or goggles throughout. For CO2 laser, Mr Kumar passes the laser handpiece over the skin in sections. It feels hot and prickly, and a cooling fan helps. Treatment takes 30 to 60 minutes.

For punch excision, each scar is removed with a tiny punch and closed with a fine stitch, which takes 20 to 45 minutes. An IPL session takes 20 to 30 minutes and feels like a warm flick against the skin.

09 Recovery

- **After CO2 laser,** the skin is red and swollen and may ooze for the first two to three days. Keep it moist with the ointment provided, and sleep with your head raised.
- **From day four to seven,** the skin flakes and peels. Don't pick it.
- **Most people are back at work** after seven to ten days, often wearing make-up once the peeling has finished.
- **Pinkness fades** over two to eight weeks. Use sun cream of factor 50 every day for at least three months.
- **Punch excision stitches** are removed at five to seven days.
- **After IPL,** mild redness settles within hours to a day or two.

10 Risks and complications

Most people recover without any serious problems. But like any treatment it carries risks, and you should understand them before you decide. Where reliable published figures exist, we've given an approximate, rounded figure. Where they don't, we've used these standard terms:

COMMON	UNCOMMON	RARE	VERY RARE
more than 1 in 100	1 in 100 to 1 in 1,000	1 in 1,000 to 1 in 10,000	fewer than 1 in 10,000

Your own risk may be higher or lower depending on your health, whether you smoke, and the details of your treatment. Mr Kumar will talk through what applies to you.

What almost everyone experiences

These aren't really complications. They're a normal part of healing.

- Redness, swelling and a sunburnt feeling after CO2 laser.
- Flaking and peeling for about a week.
- Some pinkness for several weeks.

Other complications

- **Temporary darkening of the skin** COMMON
  Brown patches can appear a few weeks after treatment, more often in darker skin. They usually fade with creams and sun protection.
- **Prolonged redness** UNCOMMON
  Pinkness lasting longer than three months.
- **Infection** UNCOMMON
  Including a flare of cold sores. Antiviral tablets reduce this risk.
- **Milia or spots** UNCOMMON
  Tiny white spots or acne spots while the skin heals, which usually settle.
- **Lighter patches of skin** RARE
  Can appear months later and may be permanent.
- **Scarring** RARE
  Very rarely, laser can cause new scarring.
- **Eye injury** VERY RARE
  Prevented by eye shields throughout treatment.

Complications of the anaesthetic

Numbing cream and local anaesthetic are very safe. Local anaesthetic stings briefly as it goes in. Rarely it causes light-headedness, and very rarely an allergic reaction.

11 Further treatment

Deeper scarring often needs two or three CO2 laser sessions, a few months apart, and IPL is usually given as a course. Your plan, and the likely number of sessions, will be explained at your consultation. The cost of any extra sessions isn't automatically included in your original fee; the clinic team can explain our policy.

12 Photographs and records

Photographs are taken before and after your treatment and kept in your medical records. They help Mr Kumar plan your treatment, record how things looked beforehand and follow your progress. This is standard good practice. If we ever want to use your photographs for teaching, publication or marketing, we will ask you separately and specifically, and saying no won't affect your care in any way.

13 Costs and insurance

Acne scar treatment is usually considered cosmetic, so it isn't normally covered by health insurance. You'll receive a written quote first, setting out the number of sessions you are likely to need. Self-pay consultations cost £250 and follow-ups £150.

14 Your decision

This is your decision and you have the right to:

- ✓ take as long as you need to decide, and bring someone with you to appointments

- say no to treatment, or withdraw your consent at any stage, without having to explain why and without it affecting any other care you receive
- ask for a second opinion from another surgeon.

15 Your personal information

Your personal and medical information is kept securely and used in line with UK data protection law (the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018). It's only shared with the people directly involved in your care, or where the law requires it, unless you give your consent for anything else.

16 Who to contact, and when to get help urgently

If you have any questions or worries, please contact the clinic during opening hours on 020 3026 9695 or info@theuclinic.com.

Contact us promptly if you have

- signs of infection: increasing pain, spreading redness, yellow crusting or a temperature
- blisters or cold sores in the treated area
- any problem with your eyes
- bleeding that doesn't stop with 20 minutes of firm pressure after punch excision

Out of hours, your emergency contact number will be given by the treating hospital or clinic. In an emergency, call 999.

17 What happens next

Before your treatment, Mr Kumar will go through this information with you again and take your written consent. If anything in this booklet has raised a

question, or if anything changes with your health or your medication before then, please let us know.

My questions

Note down anything you want to ask Mr Kumar and bring it to your next appointment.

Notes

Notes

Questions or worries?

Please contact the clinic during opening hours. Out of hours, your emergency contact number will be given by the treating hospital. In an emergency, call 999.

Telephone	020 3026 9695
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