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PATIENT INFORMATION

Caring for your scar

A simple guide to getting the best possible scar after surgery

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01 Your scar care at a glance

Every operation leaves a scar. How it heals depends partly on your skin, your genetics and where it is, but there is a lot you can do to help it become as fine, flat and pale as possible. This short guide explains the simple routine Mr Kumar recommends.

The first two weeks	Look after the wound. Keep it clean and dry, and don't pick at scabs or stitches.
From about two weeks	Once the wound has healed, massage and moisturise the scar two to three times a day, and start silicone gel or sheets.
Every day for a year	Protect the scar from the sun with clothing or sun cream of factor 50.
Six weeks to three months	Some redness, firmness and itching is normal. Ask us to check the scar if it is getting thicker or spreading.
Three to 18 months	The scar slowly softens, flattens and fades. IPL and CO2 laser can help if it is slow to settle.

02 The first two weeks: look after the wound

A wound that heals quickly and without problems gives the best scar.

- **Keep your dressing clean and dry,** and follow the advice you were given about showering and removing it.
- **Don't pick at scabs or stitches,** and don't soak the wound in a bath, swimming pool or hot tub until it has healed.

- **Avoid heavy lifting, strenuous exercise and stretching the area.** Tension on a healing wound can widen the scar.
- **Don't smoke or vape.** Nicotine reduces the blood supply to the skin and slows healing.
- **Eat well,** with plenty of protein, fruit and vegetables.

Get help quickly if

the wound becomes increasingly red, hot, swollen or painful, leaks fluid or opens up, or you develop a temperature. Contact the team who carried out your operation straight away.

03 Massage and moisturise

Scar massage is simple, free and one of the most effective things you can do. It softens and flattens the scar, eases tightness and itching, and helps it move freely over the tissues underneath.

When to start

Once the wound has fully healed: no scabs, no open areas and the stitches out. This is usually about two weeks after surgery. Never massage an open wound.

How to massage your scar

1. Use a plain, unperfumed moisturiser.
2. Press firmly with your fingertips, enough to make the scar turn pale.
3. Move in small circles along the whole length of the scar, then along it and across it.
4. Massage for about five minutes, two to three times a day.
5. Keep going for at least three months, or until the scar is soft, flat and pale.

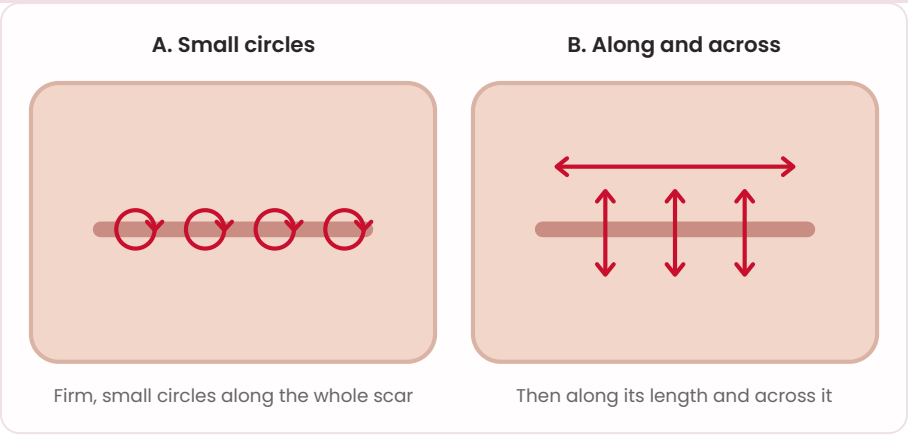


Figure 1. Massaging your scar. A simplified drawing for guidance only.

Scar oils are fine to use for massage, but there is little evidence that they work better than a plain moisturiser, and vitamin E creams can irritate some people's skin. It is the massage that matters most.

04 Silicone gel or sheets

Silicone is the best-proven product for scars. It keeps the scar hydrated and helps it settle flatter, softer and less red.

Silicone gel

Apply a thin layer twice a day and let it dry. Gel is ideal for the face, joints and areas that move, and sun cream or make-up can go on top once it is dry.

Silicone sheets

Wear for at least 12 hours a day, ideally longer, and wash and reuse them as directed. Sheets suit flat areas such as the tummy and chest.

- Start once the wound has fully healed, usually about two weeks after surgery.

- Massage first, then apply the silicone.
- Use it every day for at least two to three months, and for longer if the scar is raised.
- Stop and let us know if it irritates your skin.

Silicone gels and sheets are available from pharmacies without a prescription. Ask us if you are not sure which to choose.

05 Protect your scar from the sun

New scars burn easily, and sunlight can darken them permanently. Until your scar has fully matured, usually for at least a year:

- cover it with clothing where you can
- use sun cream of factor 50 on an exposed scar, and reapply it regularly in the sun
- avoid sunbeds.

06 What to expect as your scar heals

The skin closes in about two weeks, but a scar takes 12 to 18 months to mature. It often looks worse before it looks better.

- **The first six weeks:** pink and slightly firm.
- **Six weeks to three months:** often at its reddest, firmest and itchiest, as new collagen is laid down.
- **Three to 12 months:** gradually softer, flatter and paler.
- **12 to 18 months:** mature. Most scars end up as a fine, pale line, although a scar never disappears completely.

Itching is a normal part of healing. Massage, moisturiser and silicone usually help.

07 When to contact us

Contact us promptly if you have

- redness spreading around the wound, warmth, discharge or a temperature
- bleeding that doesn't stop with 20 minutes of firm pressure
- the wound opening up
- pain that is getting worse rather than better

Ask us to check your scar if, after six to eight weeks, it is

- getting thicker, harder or more raised
- spreading beyond the edges of the original wound
- very itchy or painful, or pulling tight across a joint
- still very red after three months

Problems caught early are much easier to treat. Please contact the clinic during opening hours on 020 3026 9695 or info@theuclinic.com.

If your operation was done elsewhere, contact the team who carried it out about any problem with the wound in the first few weeks. In an emergency, call 999.

08 Treatments that can help

If your scar is slow to settle, treatment in the first months after surgery often works better than waiting.

IPL (intense pulsed light)

Fades the redness in a red or raised scar by targeting the tiny blood vessels within it. A course of sessions about four weeks apart, with little downtime.

CO2 laser

Remodels the collagen in the scar to flatten raised areas, smooth uneven texture and blend the colour. Usually one to three sessions, with a few days of redness after each.

Steroid injections

Flatten and soften thick, raised scars and keloids, and ease itching.

Scar revision surgery

For a scar that has matured wide, tight, sunken or puckered, the scar can be removed and rejoined carefully, usually once it is at least a year old.

Had your surgery elsewhere?

You don't need to have had your operation with Mr Kumar. He is happy to assess scars after surgery anywhere, and to advise on the best way to improve them.

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.

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