

Scars

A scar develops as part of normal wound healing. This process starts immediately after your operation and continues for up to 2 years.

Despite the common misconception, no surgery, even plastic surgery, is possible without leaving a scar. The aim is a thin scar that is difficult or impossible for others to see.

The final outcome is reliant on several factors:

- Patient: age, skin type (very pale or dark skin), racial background (e.g. African or Asian), medical comorbidities (e.g. diabetes) and smoking all affect scarring adversely.
- Operative site: certain body areas heal better (i.e. eyelids) than others (i.e. chest).
- Surgical technique: plastic surgery techniques through careful planning and meticulous repair can improve your outcome.

Scar Maturation

All wounds whether surgical or traumatic, go through a process of maturation. At 6-10 weeks an "immature scar" is formed and this is usually the most red, tender and firm. As the scar matures it will become softer, flatter and paler. This process of maturation can take up to two years to complete.

Some scars can become problematic. They may become painful, raised, itchy and red. These are called hypertrophic or keloid scars. If this does occur it usually takes 3 months before becoming evident. Please contact WPRS if this occurs and the nurse will provide advice.

Post-Operative Care

Scar management starts the moment your sutures are removed.

Micropore (flesh coloured) tape (available at WPRS or chemist) should be directly applied to the wound and left in place. This should be changed every 2-3 days or when lifting off. You can shower over this and then pat it dry. For maximum benefit the tape should be worn continuously until the wound has healed

Scar massage is important once you have ceased taping your scar. Use a sorblene moisturiser and rub with the pad of your finger into the wound in a circular motion. Pay particular attention to any areas that have become raised and firm and apply moderate pressure to these areas while rubbing in the moisturiser. You should repeat this process 3-4 times per day as advised by WPRS, for a minimum of 1 month following the removal of your sutures.

Vitamin e, bio-oil and silicone oils are available but they are expensive and are often not necessary in order to achieve a good scar result. WPRS will advise if we recommend any of these products for you.

Avoidance of sunlight on the scar as it matures is very important. Sunburn to a scar may result in long term pigmentation change in the scar which is very difficult to treat. SPF 30+ sunscreen and protective clothing (where possible) should be worn over your scar for at least 6 months.

Silicone sheets (available at the chemist) will be recommended for you if you develop hypertrophic/keloid scars. Use of these products will be explained to you by the nurses at WPRS.

If you have any concerns please contact WPRS on (03) 5562 5330.