

Scars and Wound Healing

- All surgery leaves a scar. The body forms “glue” to hold the skin of a wound together. The glue is really made up of skin cells and body fluid.
- Wounds take a year to mature. Scars look better over time. They start out raised and pink (fig 1). They get flatter and paler with time (fig 2).
- Scars from surgery become white lines if you have light skin or brown lines if you have dark skin.
- A scar is often shinier than the rest of the skin.

Fig 1



Fig 2

How long will the wound be pink?

Most often in lighter skinned people, healthy, healing skin is pink.

The pink color slowly fades. In darker skin, the darker color gradually fades.

How should I take care of the scar?

- Avoid sudden twisting and strong stretching of the scar for the first six months.
- Always keep the scar away from the sun. New skin is very easily damaged by the sun's rays. Wear sunscreen, clothing or a hat over the area for the first 6 months.

What can I do to make the wound look and feel better?

Massage

Use gentle pressure with your fingers in a circular motion over the scar. Do this for ten seconds, ten times a day. It will keep the scar small and flat. Start scar massage one week after the stitches are removed. Vaseline or petroleum jelly can be used for scar massage.

Scar care bandages

Bandages with thin layers of silicone can prevent thick scars. They make scars feel softer and look flatter. Most scars heal without using these bandages. It's best to ask your doctor if they will help you.

Why does the wound itch?

Your skin senses the injury. As the wound heals, the nerve endings are stimulated. This causes itching. Itching will get better with time.

When does a wound need to be checked?

Wounds that grow, become more raised, or are very itchy need to be checked. A keloid is a scar that keeps growing and can get larger than the original scar. If you think this is happening be sure to tell your doctor. Keloids can be treated by a doctor who knows how to care for these scars. They are treated with a laser, injections, massage, and thick silicone bandages. Often times more than one of these treatments works best.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.