

Incision and Scar Care

First, it is important that you always keep in mind that scars take **at least one year** to mature. That means that your scar will continue to change in color, size, and texture for at least one year. A scar that is bright red/purple, raised, and itchy a few weeks after surgery can be expected to become more pale in color, flatter, and less itchy over the one-year period. Not all scars will mature ideally, though. Some scars might not get more pale or flat. There are things you can do during the first year of a scar's life to "optimize" the scar maturation process. Below is a list of suggestions for your scar care. Keep in mind that not all treatments are appropriate for all scars. You should choose the treatments that make sense for you, based on your scar's location, size, and characteristics, and your lifestyle needs.

What to do first: You should not begin any scar treatment until your incisions are completely healed with no crusting, no scabbing, no drainage, and no raw surfaces. You should wash over incisions with warm soap and water while in the shower. Once you are out of the shower, pat the incisions dry with a towel. Then run your fingers along all incisions feeling for something sticking you or poking you. This could be a spitting stitch. The other two ways that you may know that you have a spitting stitch is if you have an area that was totally healed and then breaks open or an area that just won't heal. These are the three ways you know you have a spitting stitch. Spitting stitches need to be removed as soon as possible as they can cause wound-healing issues. You will need to do this daily until you have reached 3-4 months after surgery. If you have a spitting stitch, contact our office and we will schedule you an appointment to come in and so that we can clip it out. If you feel comfortable enough, you can also do this at home. Once your incisions are healed and have no more crusting, you can begin your scar treatment.

Options after your incisions are healed:

ScarGuard: similar to a clear fingernail polish. You paint this treatment onto your scar; it dries in seconds and you can put clothing over it immediately. It contains silicone, vitamin E, and cortisone. It can make scars both lighter in color and flatter and softer in texture. This treatment is convenient, as it will stay in place until you shower and wash it off. This once-daily application makes it easy to be compliant with the treatment schedule. You can use this treatment for several months or longer. This treatment is available in my office.

TNS Recovery Complex: a cream that can be coupled with ScarGuard or used alone. Contains a proprietary mixture of over 110 stable growth factors and cytokines that play a critical role in skin tissue growth and repair. Use twice daily for about 2-3 months. You can also use this on your face, as it's excellent for facial skin rejuvenation!

Mederma: a cream that needs to be applied three times daily to be truly effective. Contains allantoin (onion extract), which is thought to improve scar color and texture. This is over-the-counter at local pharmacies/grocers. Choose this option if you can be compliant with the three-times-a-day application. Use for several months or longer.

Silicone sheeting: These include Curad Scar Care or Neosporin Scar Solutions (both sold in pharmacies or grocery stores) or custom sheets ordered through my office. Silicone sheets help primarily with scar texture, but not so much with scar color. They are specifically beneficial for raised scars, making them flatter over time. Cut the sheet to cover your scar, then tape it in place, using it as often as possible. Sheets are reusable until they no longer stick in place.

Massage is always useful during scar maturation. Firm massage in a circular motion over the scarred area can begin once you can tolerate it (usually a couple of weeks after surgery). Do this as often as you think about it (several times daily, if convenient). My office can recommend a professional masseuse who works with many of our postoperative patients (particularly liposuction patients).

Again, please remember that healing is a process. Your scars will change over time, and we are always available for your questions and concerns. (404-250-3333)