

Post-operative Scar Management



The first two weeks post-op

The wound was sutured and sealed with a sterile dressing at the time of your surgery. Keep your dressings dry and intact. There is no need to change the dressing or check the wound until Dr Constantin sees you at 2 weeks. If you have any concerns about your wound or dressings, please contact Dr Constantin's rooms on (02) 9409 0503, or email a photo of your wound or dressing to team@drharryconstantin.com.

Your scar will keep changing for about **12 months** after surgery. Early on it is usually red, raised and firm. Over the following months it should flatten, soften and fade. How your final scar looks depends on three things:

1

The surgery

Where the incision is placed, closing the skin without tension, fine sutures, removing sutures at the right time and preventing infection.

2

Your aftercare

Keeping the wound clean, protecting it from the sun, silicone taping and scar massage.

3

Genetics & site

Everyone heals differently, and some people form thicker scars despite the best care. The shoulder and chest are among the areas most prone to thick (hypertrophic) or keloid scars.

How to look after your scar



STEP 1 Sun protection

Sun exposure can darken a healing scar permanently. Always use sun protection, but be extra vigilant with your surgical scar: cover it with clothing or apply SPF 50+ sunscreen whenever it is exposed.

For at least 12 months



STEP 2 Silicone scar tape

Silicone keeps the scar hydrated and helps it flatten.

- Start once the wound is closed and dry – usually from 2 weeks after surgery
- Brown silicone tape is available from pharmacies or online. Wear it all day; you can shower with it on
- Take it off for scar massage, then put the same piece back on. Replace it weekly, or when it stops sticking

From about 2 weeks



STEP 3 Silicone gel (Strataderm) — an alternative to tape

Strataderm is a clear, quick-drying silicone gel. It works the same way as silicone tape and is useful where tape keeps peeling off, such as around the shoulder and armpit. **Use either the tape or the gel, not both.**

See page 2 for how to use it.



Using Strataderm

- Apply a very thin layer to the clean, dry scar. It should dry in 3–4 minutes; wipe off any excess with a tissue
- Use once a day, or twice a day if the area is often washed or exposed. It works best when it stays on the skin around the clock
- Continue for at least 60–90 days, and keep going while the scar is still improving
- If you are doing scar massage, massage first, then apply the gel
- Once dry, sunscreen or make-up can go on top. It may mark clothing if you dress before it has dried
- Do not use on open wounds or near the eyes, and do not layer it over other skin products unless advised
- Available from pharmacies without a prescription. It has no active ingredients and is not absorbed into the skin, so it suits sensitive skin

4

STEP 4 Scar massage

Massage helps soften the scar and improve its thickness and texture. It also desensitises the area: the scar and some of the skin around it are often numb after surgery, and regular touch helps retrain your brain to accept the scar as part of you.

- Start once the wound has fully healed and is strong enough — usually around 4 weeks after surgery
- Any simple moisturiser or ointment works (silicone gel, vitamin E, Vaseline); there is little evidence that one is better than another
- Massage gently along the length of the scar for a few minutes, once or twice a day. It should be gentle, not aggressive

From about 4 weeks

5

STEP 5 Other treatments

If your scar is worrying you, or remains thick, raised or discoloured, discuss it with Dr Constantin. He can talk you through other therapies, including:

- **Laser therapy** — can improve scar colour and contour
- **Steroid injections** — used for keloid or hypertrophic scars
- **Scar revision surgery** — occasionally considered once the scar has matured

Dr Constantin may also refer you to a plastic and reconstructive surgeon for assessment and guidance.



Red flags — contact Dr Constantin immediately

It is not normal for the scar and surrounding skin to become red and painful, to have a discharge or smell, or for you to have a fever. These are usually signs of infection. The same applies if the wound opens.