

Hand therapy department

# How to look after scars

## Information for patients

Your body naturally produces scar tissue to heal wounds and repair damaged tissue. Scar tissue can stick to structures such as the bone underneath and / or the skin above. This causes a bond that stops the skin from moving naturally, which can lead to stiffness and reduced movement.

## Scar management – massage

### How scar massage can help

Massaging or ‘mobilising’ scars can help to:

1. separate underlying structures that scar tissue has stuck together, called tethering
2. reduce pain, hypersensitivity and itch
3. soften scars, by increasing the elasticity within the scar tissue
4. reduce volume, by helping to flatten certain bulky scars

### Fingertip scar massage

Using your thumb or fingertips, apply firm pressure in circular motions to massage the full length of the scar. If you can't tolerate massage right over the scar, start with the skin around it and over time move towards the scar.

We recommend you use a fragrance-free lotion such as E45 or Diprobase® cream

Do this for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes \_\_\_\_\_ times a day

### Mechanical scar massage

Using devices such as a mini massager adds vibration to scar massage, which helps to stimulate the muscles. You can buy a mini massager to use at home. You can buy these on the internet.

We recommend you use a fragrance-free lotion such as E45 or aqueous cream.

Do this for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes \_\_\_\_\_ times a day

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## Scar management – silicone gel

Silicone gel is a safe and effective treatment. It helps to reduce redness and flattens and softens a scar.

### Applying the silicone:

1. Make sure the scar and surrounding skin is clean and dry before application.
2. Peel off the liner and place the sticky side of the silicone gel onto the scar.
3. You can use the same sheet for up to five weeks. So, when you take it off, put the sticky side of the tape back onto a clean liner.

### When to wear the silicone gel:

You should wear the silicone gel for a certain amount of time for maximum benefit. You should wear it:

- night-time
- daytime
- full-time
- for at least \_\_\_\_\_ hours per day

Some people can experience an allergic reaction to silicone. Though this does not happen often, we advise you do a skin patch test. To test your skin, wear the silicone patch for two hours before going to bed the first night. If there are no problems or concerns after 24 hours, it is safe to continue wearing the silicone gel.

Allergic reactions may include redness, itchiness and lumpiness. This usually goes away within two to three days of stopping wearing the silicone gel.

### Silicone cleaning instructions:

Silicone should be cleaned daily to avoid skin irritation. To clean the silicone gel:

- use a mild, non-oily soap solution
- rinse with clean water
- pat dry
- place it on a clean liner.

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## Scar management – taping

Using paper tape or steri strips helps keep tension off the scar and applies pressure. Both of these will improve the final scar.

Apply the tape along the line of the scar.

## Useful contact details

To reschedule an appointment:

- 1) Phone: 020 3311 0333  
Option 1: If your appointment is on the same day.  
Option 2: If your appointment is another date in the future.
- 2) Email: [appointments@imperial.nhs.uk](mailto:appointments@imperial.nhs.uk)

To contact a therapist: [imperial.handtherapyimperial@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.handtherapyimperial@nhs.net).

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

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## Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

Hand therapy  
Published: January 2024  
Review date: January 2028  
Reference no: 816  
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