

# ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL HEALTHSOURCE

## Improve the Appearance of Scars

It is a fact that when we cut our skin a scar frequently forms. The severity of the scar depends on its location on the body and your genetic predisposition as well as the device that caused the scar.

There are two primary types of scars: hypertrophic scars and keloid scars. Hypertrophic scars are red, thick, raised, and do not develop beyond the site of the injury or incision. While no scar can be completely removed, hypertrophic scars can usually be improved with gentle massage techniques, silicon compression dressings, and in rare situations, steroid injections. No surgery to revise a scar should be done during the hypertrophic stage.

Keloid scars, on the other hand, are an overgrowth of scar tissue in which the scar grows beyond the site of the injury. They are generally red or pink and become dark tan over time. Scar revision usually does not improve keloid scars. In fact, attempted revision can actually make the scarring worse. Steroid injections, silicone compression, and time will usually cause a keloid scar to soften, but there will always be a scar at the site of a previous keloid.

For the best scar prevention after surgery, follow your physician's recommendation while the surgical incision is healing and allow six-12 months for scars to fade naturally. If you are still unhappy with the look of the scar, you may want to consider scar revision, a procedure performed by plastic and reconstruction surgeons.

Some scarring can be reduced with a nonsurgical procedure called micropigmentation or camouflaging. This involves applying pigments to the scar to blend it in with surrounding tissue.

Complications from scar revision are rare, but occasionally include infection, worsening of the scar, numbness, pain, or bleeding.

While frequently advertised as treatment for scars, over-the-counter oils, ointments, and creams are not proven to reduce scarring. Simple scar massage and silicone compression will improve a scar's appearance dramatically.

If you are concerned about the appearance of a scar, call Jeffrey A. Herold, MD, FACS, 920-803-1598 for recommendations on the best approach to treat your scar.



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