

Scar Revision Surgery

Patient Information

What is Scar Revision surgery?

Any cut through the skin will cause a scar to form. The natural healing process always follows the same paths, however, the time it takes and the amount of scar tissue that is formed varies from individual to individual. Typically scars will become red and lumpy before eventually settling to be softer and pale. If given adequate time, most scars will settle to be acceptable, although it can often take in excess of 18 months to get to this point. If, after the maturation stage is complete, the appearance of the scar is still of concern, it may be possible to perform surgical scar revision on the affected area to try to improve the nature of the scar. This needs to be done with careful consideration as there is no guarantee that the end result will be better. If the following factors are present, it may be worth considering surgical revision:

- Poor healing of the initial repair due to infection or wound breakdown
- Ingrained dirt
- Banding
- Poor scar direction
- Poor repair technique used in initial wound closure
- Stretching
- Indentation or tethering

Is the procedure right for me?

A detailed consultation with your consultant plastic surgeon is essential prior to undergoing any surgical procedure. During the consultation, your surgeon will discuss your area/s of concern, desired improvements, options available (including no treatment at all) and expected outcomes. Your surgeon will examine your existing scarring and may take some photographs for your medical records. You will be given a 'cooling-off' period of at least 2 weeks between initial consultation and the date of your operation to ensure you have ample time to reflect on all aspects of the procedure before proceeding (although please bear in mind the waiting lists for our surgeons mean this period is invariably significantly longer).

How is the procedure carried out?

Should scar revision surgery be agreed upon as the most suitable treatment, the procedure will be carried out by your surgeon in our operating theatre. Following the administration of an appropriate anaesthetic, the scar may be excised and carefully resutured. Long lasting stitches under the skin may be used to support the scar as it heals. Scars may be disguised by converting them to a zig zag or W plasty. Scars may be redirected and lengthened using a Z plasty. Scars may be flattened by using dermabrasion.

During the scar revision surgery, tethered and indented scars may be released by dividing the tight bands under the skin using a needle in a technique called subcision.

The edges of the cuts are closed carefully with dissolvable stitches and dressings are applied. After the surgery is complete, you will be able to return home the same day.

Aftercare and recovery

After surgery it is important to rest to allow the area to settle. You should take it easy for the first 2 days post-surgery, remembering that the less you do, the less you will bruise. As a general rule of thumb, avoid doing anything that would make your face redden during this initial stage of healing. This may range from avoiding hot baths to ensuring you do not exert yourself through lifting, for example. Patients generally experience minimum discomfort after this procedure and healing usually progresses quickly. After surgery the area will bruise a little reaching a maximum after 48 hours, gradually settling over subsequent weeks. Normally, you will need two days off work and will need to avoid vigorous exercise for around four weeks whilst deeper level healing takes place. Showering is permitted on the second post-operative day. Scars tend to be quite red initially, turning to purple and then fading to white. Most patients will form good quality scars over time.

What to expect after surgery

The surgery is usually performed as a day case under local or general anaesthesia. Our highly experienced medical team will be on hand during your stay to care for your needs. Skin at the surgical site may feel tight and sore for a day or two following surgery. Simple painkillers should be enough to keep you comfortable.

Risks and Complications

All surgical procedures are associated with risks. Your Surgeon will explain these in detail during initial consultation, enabling you to reach an informed decision on whether you wish to proceed. Serious complications are uncommon, however patients should be aware of the following complications prior to undergoing scar revision surgery-

- Anaesthesia risks including allergic reaction, blood clots, heart attack, stroke and death
- Infection
- Healing problems
- Extrusion of deep stitches
- Loss of blood supply to skin
- Change of the colour of skin
- Bleeding, swelling and bruising
- Asymmetry
- Poor scarring of skin

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- Increased or reduced sensation
- Damage to deeper structures
- Unsatisfactory results
- Pain, which may persist
- Change over time
- Allergic reaction
- Possibility of revisional surgery

Results

Scarring will be as discreet and neat as possible to give skin the best chance of achieving satisfactory healing. Scars will always be visible, but hopefully will be less noticeable than they were prior to revision surgery.

Alternative treatments

For patients preferring to avoid further surgery, the following non-surgical procedures are available at the clinic and may be effective in lessening the appearance of scar tissue. Fractional Laser Skin Resurfacing may be used to take the redness out of a scar and help to soften it a little. The laser can be used in a similar way as dermabrasion to flatten the scar to improve contour. Medical Micro-Needling can be used to stimulate natural maturation and encourage softening. Dermal Filler may be used to lift contour irregularities.

If you experience any problems or have concerns following surgery, please do not hesitate to call our direct patient line for assistance on 07908 891059.

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Patient Pre & Post-Operative Care Guide

Pre-Operative Preparations

2 weeks before surgery-

We would recommend that you start taking Arnica anti-bruising tablets, three times a day, two weeks prior to and two weeks after surgery. These are available from several health and wellbeing stores, including Holland & Barratt.

1 week before surgery-

Avoid Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Nurofen and other similar painkillers one week before and two weeks after surgery. Paracetamol is the safest painkiller to take, if necessary.

Stop taking Vitamin E and its compounds (such as evening primrose oil, fish oils, garlic and garlic capsules) 1 week before surgery and 2 weeks after surgery. Taking Vitamin E in any form can cause bleeding and post-operative complications.

Day of surgery-

You must take your routine medicines at the usual time, unless advised otherwise and bring them with you (including inhalers).

Remove lenses prior to arrival at the clinic.

You will be discharged from the clinic with steristrips in place at the treatment site. If you think that you may feel self-conscious about this, we recommend that you bring a scarf.

Post-Operative Instructions

Average length of stay-

The surgery will be performed as a day case under a local anaesthetic unless your surgeon advised otherwise during consultation. **Patients should not drive for a minimum of 24 hours post-operatively, so alternative means of transport should be arranged.**

0-2 weeks after surgery

- It is essential to ensure activity is kept to a minimum and to rest as much as possible. The less you do, the less you will bruise
- Shower if you wish and feel free to wash your hair, but please keep the steristrips as dry as possible
- Keep your head up to reduce swelling and sleep with extra pillows to raise your head
- To minimise bruising, avoid bending down, hot baths, heavy lifting and anything else that would naturally cause your face to redden
- Paracetamol can be taken as required

2 days after surgery onwards

- Gentle walks are permitted
- Driving may resume

3 weeks after surgery onwards

- Moderate cardiovascular exercise may resume but do listen to your body- it will tell you if you are overdoing things. Deeper level healing will continue for several weeks and overdoing things may lead to secondary bruising

6-12 weeks after surgery onwards

- Swimming and more strenuous exercise may resume, as advised by your surgeon at your follow up appointment

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