

Post-Operative Wound Care in the Medium Term

Is my skin back to normal strength after the first 2 weeks and can I go back to normal exercise?

No. Whilst the top layer of the skin will have healed, it takes months for the skin to fully recover and it will never have the strength it once had. You can normally start to resume exercise after the first couple of weeks, but you should be careful not to strain the area of the operation. It is recommended you start back gently and slowly increase the amount and intensity of exercise.

Why are the ends of my scar raised and lumpy?

Even with elliptical excisions, there may be a slight excess of skin at either end called a Burrow's triangle. The body will slowly remove this excess skin but it can take several months. There may also be a lump at the ends where buried dissolving sutures are located. These are made of a sugar material and dissolve over 3 months, so again the lumpiness will improve.

My scar has gone red in one part and there appears to be a white material sticking out?

Most surgical wounds will have a deep suture material beneath the surface designed to be load bearing, holding it all together. These sometimes trigger off a reaction and the body will start to expel this foreign material. Any material sticking out can be trimmed and the wound will settle down. If there is marked redness, soreness of the skin, discharge, pus or you feel unwell, you may have an infection in the surrounding skin and you should seek medical help.

Can I massage the scar?

When you cut the skin and suture it together all of the layers are slightly disrupted and it takes 12-18 months for a scar to remodel and mature. Massage can accelerate that process and improve scar thickness and lumpiness. The skin itself should have healed and massage is best deferred until a couple of weeks after surgery. Firm pressure should be applied along the length of the wound for 10 mins on a daily basis. A lubricating oil, eg Bio-oil, olive oil or a greasy moisturising ointment can all be used to aid the massage.

Does silicone help wound healing?

Silicone gels and dressings are used to stabilise a wound and improve wound healing. Popular brands are Kelo-cote and Dermatix gel or Cica care gel sheets. Gel sheets can be washed and re-used and are a great way to give the best cosmetic outcome, using daily for the first few months.

