

SCARS AND SCAR MANAGEMENT

What are scars?

Scars are the body's normal response to wounding. They are always permanent – there is no such thing as scarless healing! However, as Plastic Surgeons we like to pay more attention to scars and their management.

What will my scars look like after surgery?

It is completely NORMAL for scars to look red and lumpy after any operation. Initially, for the first couple of weeks, the scar(s) may look excellent. However, they will then become red and lumpy. This is a normal response to wound healing. Over time these scars will then mature and the scars will soften, and become flatter and paler. This process takes around 18 months to 2 years.

How do I look after my scars after surgery?

Mr Banwell will always tape your scar line for the first 2 weeks after surgery. Usually this will be with brown micropore tape [this is showerproof and will stay in place as long as it is dried with a hairdryer each time it gets wet]. Ideally the scar should be taped for an additional few weeks to protect and support it.

After this time, Mr Banwell recommends a twice daily massage with a moisturizing cream (eg. Vitamin E). Do not use E45 as it is too thick and claggy! This should continue for at least 3-6 months and ideally up to a year. The purpose of this is to speed up the natural healing process and allow the scars to soften, flatten and become paler.

Should I protect my scars in the sun?

Absolutely!!! If immature scars (within the first year) are exposed to the sun they can become pigmented or stay red permanently. It is therefore important to cover scars with clothing or sun protection factors (SPF50) to optimize scar outcome.

Are there any other useful scar treatments?

Moisturisers and massage are by far the best treatment for scars but additional treatments such as silicone gel sheeting (eg. Cica-care gel) or silicone gel applications (eg. Dermatix or Kelo-cote) may also be beneficial. However, there is NO evidence for the benefit of Bio-oil but many people do use this.

Can I get problems with my scars?

Early problems following surgery include infection, bleeding and the wound splitting apart (dehiscence). Adverse scarring can also occur (such as hypertrophy and keloid scarring). Hypersensitivity of scars can also be a problem (this is usually due to not enough massaging in the early post-operative period) as can itchiness and pain.

Are there any other cosmetic treatments for scarring?

A variety of different treatments may be used to improve the appearance of scarring (including acne scarring). In some cases scar revision may be appropriate where the scar can be refashioned. However, commencing a medical grade skin care regime on a daily basis can do wonders for your complexion and the luminosity of your skin but furthermore it can also aid the appearance of scars. Chemical peels, dermaroller, dermastamp or surgical scar revision may also be suitable treatments. Mr Banwell or one of his aesthetic nurses would be delighted to discuss suitable treatments with you.

Important Notice

Mr Banwell strongly advises you stop smoking prior to surgery as this can affect the outcome of surgery and increase complication rates. Nutritional supplements, anticoagulant medication and blood thinners (eg. aspirin and brufen) all increase the risk of bleeding and should be stopped prior to surgery unless otherwise instructed.