

# Scar management following your hand operation



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## Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is aimed at patients who have had an operation on one or both of their hands. It explains how to look after your wound to promote healing and limit the effects of scarring.

## What is scar tissue?

Scarring is your body's normal reaction to an injury or operation and is an important part of the healing process.

There are three stages of healing:

1. **The inflammatory stage** – your body reacts to the injury and cleans the wound of damaged tissue. This lasts about one week.
2. **The proliferation stage** – scarring fibres draw the wound together. This lasts about one month.
3. **The maturation stage** – the scar fibres are rearranged and become stronger. The scar will become softer, flatter and pale. This can take up to 12 months.

## What is scar management?

It is therapy treatment to minimise scarring.

Usually, your hand has smooth tissues gliding easily over each other. Scarring can slow or stop these gliding tissues. Without smoothly working parts, your hand movement and function can become limited.

To limit scarring, your wound needs to be managed well.

## What are the benefits?

Therapy treatments for scarring aim to make the scar tissue behave as much like normal tissue as possible.

Scar management will allow early free movement and improve both the use and appearance of your hand.

## What does it involve?

You need to regularly follow the massage advice given to you by your therapist so that your scar forms normally.

Everyone responds differently to scarring, so the treatments differ for each person. Some common treatments are **scar massage**, splinting, silicone gel, pressure garments and ultrasound.

This leaflet describes scar massage. Your therapist may also provide you with information on other treatments (leaflets available).

## How does scar massage work?

It works by softening and flattening the scar on the skin surface. It also helps by sliding all the tissue layers over each other.

## How do I massage my scar?

Use a plain, non-perfumed hand cream like E45. Wipe a thin film of cream all over your scar. Use small, firm, circular movements, rubbing the cream onto and around your scar. Do this for three to five minutes without stopping and repeat from three to six times each day. Your therapist will demonstrate on you so you will know what to do and how it should feel.

Massaging your scar can be helpful for up to three months after your injury or operation.

## Further information

For more information or if you have any concerns about your scar, please contact:

The Hand Therapists  
Therapy Department  
Royal Cornwall Hospital  
Truro

Telephone: 01872 252601 or 01872 252885