

Corticosteroid Injections

Despite these treatments, some scars do not resolve completely. In these cases, the injection of a small amount of steroid into the scar can also help to soften and flatten any areas that have not responded well. This is usually at least 12 months after scar development. These injections are given every 6-8 weeks, depending on how well the scar responds.

Surgical Treatments

Surgery is usually the last treatment option to treat scars because most scars do soften and improve with time. Scars that are initially causing restriction of movement can improve to the extent that surgery is not needed.

Patients prone to problem scarring will often go on to develop it again. Therefore the risk of recurrence needs to be considered carefully before surgery is planned. Various techniques can be used to either break up the scar, or remove it completely by inserting a skin graft in its place.

Patients will then continue to be treated by the Burns Outreach Specialist Nurses and Therapists.

If you need any further information or have any questions relating to your scar or its treatment, then please ask a member of the team.

Burns Outreach Service 0161 291 6318 / 6317

Hypertrophic Scarring

Manchester Burn Care Service



Scarring is a normal part of the healing process. Although there can be a difference in colour, most scars remain soft and supple. They will gradually fade over time, although it can take up to two years for a scar to reach its best result. This is often the case for superficial burns.

Hypertrophic Scars

Deeper burns and burns which have taken longer to heal are at risk of developing raised, rigid scars. These scars are known as hypertrophic scars. Unfortunately, some people are genetically more prone to problem scarring than others. Two people could have the same burn, but scar completely differently.

Hypertrophic scars occur when there is over production of collagen during the healing process. This can cause the scar to be red, raised, itchy and painful. All hypertrophic scars remain within the boundaries of the original wound.

Generally, these scars soften and improve over a period of time but during the initial 'active' stage can be quite problematic, particularly if they cover a joint. As the scar matures, it will quite often shrink in size and in some cases affect the movement and function of that joint.

If the scar is going to become hypertrophic, then this can usually be seen in the first month following healing. This is why we would want to see you once the burn is healed, to assess the scar at that time. Initial treatment is firm massage of the scar with a simple moisturiser. Massage can help breakdown the collagen fibres within the scar, which helps to reduce any slightly raised scars and rehydrates the scar tissue.

Unfortunately, in some cases this is not enough to prevent the formation of thicker, raised scars. If these do continue to occur, then other scar management techniques can be used, alongside massage.

Silicone Therapy

Silicone is a non-invasive and painless way of treating scars. It remains a little unclear exactly how silicone softens scar tissue. It is thought that a combination of pressure and covering of the scar helps to rehydrate and therefore add moisture to the scar. Silicone comes in different forms, including thick gel sheets, thin gel sheets, and silicone oils. A combination of silicone and pressure therapy is often used to obtain the best results possible.

Pressure Garments

These are tight fitting, elasticated garments designed to apply pressure to raised scars to help soften and flatten them. This can give the scar an improved cosmetic appearance in the future. These garments are made specifically for you so you will need to be measured for a good fit. In order to get the best results possible, the garments should ideally be worn for 23 hours a day, removed only for bathing or showering.

Over time the garments lose their elasticity, they therefore need to be renewed every 6–8 weeks (gloves tend to last only 4–6 weeks). These can be re-ordered either when you attend clinic or over the telephone, and are then posted to you. Garments are usually worn until the scar matures and softens, this can be anything from six months to two years.

For areas where it is difficult to achieve a uniform pressure, a mouldable plastic plate can be used. This can be worn on its own or under a pressure garment, to add additional pressure.