

Scars and Scar Massage

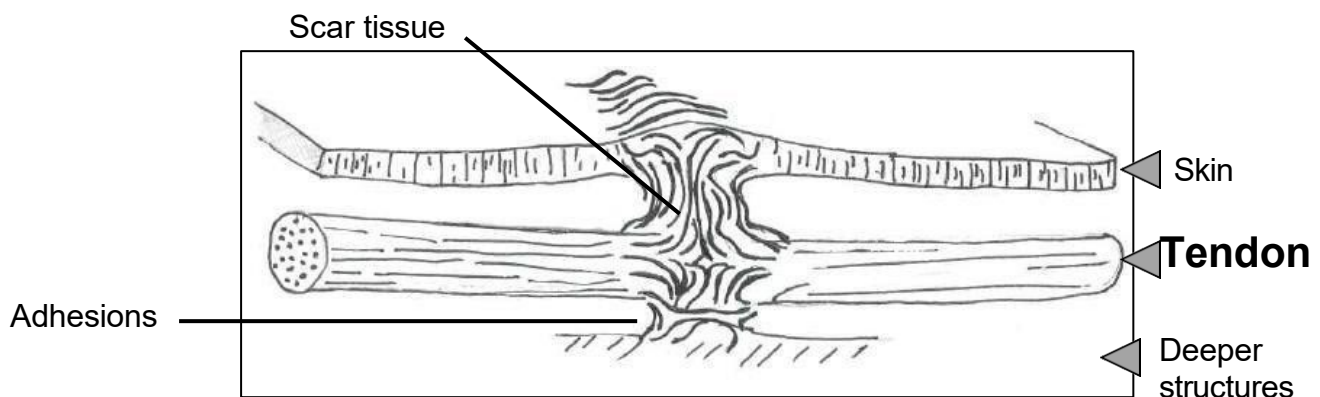
This leaflet offers information about scar management, especially after an operation. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the therapist in charge of your care.

What are scars?

Scars develop because of injury to the skin. This is a normal process and may be due to cuts, incisions, burns or crush injuries. Scars develop both on and below the skin. Your body makes fibres out of collagen to both create and strengthen the scar.

The longer a wound takes to heal or the more damaged the skin, the more chance the scar will be thicker and less flexible. Scar tissue is never as good as the skin or tissue it replaces. Your age and skin type can also affect how a scar forms and behaves.

Adhesions are bands of scar tissue that anchor and support the wound. These bind together all the tissue they encounter. You can think of adhesions as internal scar tissue.



Is there anything I can do to help manage my scar?

Scar massage is a way of softening and flattening scars. It can reduce scar tissue build up and helps make scars less noticeable. Your scar(s) will continue to grow and change for about twelve to eighteen months following injury or surgery, so the earlier and more regularly you massage your scar, the less the chance of long-term problems.

Scar massage can help:

- reduce itchiness or over-sensitivity of scars
- moisturise your scar if you use cream
- improve the flexibility and softness of scars.

You should start massaging your scars when your wounds are healed or after your stitches are removed. Your therapist may advise you to start earlier or later depending on the surgery you have had and the condition of your skin.

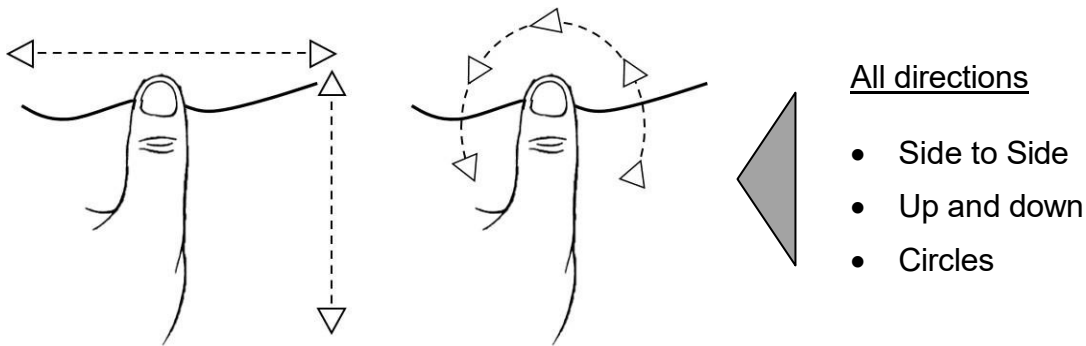
How do I massage my scars?

Apply a water-based cream, such as aqueous cream, E45 or Diprobase to the scar.

You can either use the back of your thumb or the middle joint of a bent finger to massage the scar and tissue around the scar.

Massage your scar in all directions.

Massage beyond the borders of the scar as the scar tissue may have formed under the skin beyond the scar line



Apply as much pressure as you can tolerate, beginning with light pressure and moving to a deeper and firmer pressure.

Massage your scar every day, _____ times a day for at least _____ minutes at a time.

You should carry on massaging your scars for at least six months after your surgery or injury.

What happens if I do not do anything?

Your scar could become hard and inflexible or adhesions may form. Scars that cross a joint could stop you from being able to bend or straighten the joint (a contracture). This may cause a deformity or limit movement which can affect the way you use your hand.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the information provided in this leaflet, please feel free to discuss them with your therapist at your next appointment. For more urgent queries the team can be contact on the **treatment enquiries** telephone number listed below.

Your therapist's name is: _____

Treatment enquiries: 020 8725 1038

Appointments: 020 8725 0007

Email: handtherapy@stgeorges.nhs.uk



For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care.

You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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