

SCARS after Plastic Surgery

All scars will go through various natural phases of healing and maturation. Typically any surgical scar will become red and slightly lumpy over the first 6-weeks. This is due to a period of scar inflammation, which is fundamental to the process of wound healing.



The scar should then gradually fade, losing its redness and turning pale, whilst also becoming softer and flatter. This period of scar maturation starts a couple of months after the surgery and continues for 1-2 years. Therefore, this period of time is usually necessary to assess the scar's final appearance. Whilst most scars settle well, occasionally problematic or abnormal scars form. These can sometimes be unpredictable, and an understanding that these can occur is important in your decision-making about proceeding with surgery.



Problematic scars

Stretched scars

If scars are under tension there is a chance they can widen as they mature. This means that whilst they remain flat, they can stretch in width. Occasionally it may be possible to revise these scars if there is a situation where the tension can be relieved, or there is less tension in the surrounding skin; however, it is often not possible to significantly improve stretched scars. Stretched scars are more common in children who are growing (whose skin is therefore continually under tension) and also on certain areas of the body, such as the upper inner thighs.



Hypertrophic scars

Hypertrophic means over-growth, and this refers to a red lumpy scar that can develop in some people. This most commonly occurs as a result of a prolonged early inflammatory phase of wound healing. This may occur in situations of delayed healing, such as due to a wound infection, or a wound coming apart slightly and requiring longer to heal than usual. They may also occur in scars under significant tension, such as the central part of an abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) scar. Often these can be revised (cut out and re-stitched) successfully.



Keloid scars

Keloid scars are thickened and lumpy scars that are more common in people of Asian or Afro-Caribbean descent. They are a genetic trait, and therefore some people are "keloid formers". It is important to mention if you have a history of keloid scarring as this may impact on the decision making process.



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