

# AESTHETICA

PLASTIC SURGERY | MEDICAL SPA

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## What About The Scarring?

All wounds heal with a scar whether traumatic or surgical incision. Plastic surgeons are not able to erase scars. However, they attempt to achieve minimal scarring by their advanced surgical technique and post-operative management. The prominence of the scar, its red color and firmness, are a function of a patient's age, skin type, health and maturity of the scar. Often, after repair of a laceration, the scar will appear very small for an initial 3 to 6 weeks, only to undergo subsequent enlargement or hypertrophy. Young patients seem to make extra thick scars, which will be red and raised. The scars may stay red and itch for six to twenty-four months after an injury. Older patients tend to make scars that are less reactive, which mature more quickly. Ultimately, we cannot predict or control the end result: we can only attempt to influence the final outcome of the scar.

In some cases the physician may instruct the patient to massage a scar to decrease the tendency to hypertrophy or form contractures. Typically 2 to 4 fifteen minute massage episodes per day over 1-2 months will have the greatest impact. This is typically done in conjunction with **vitamin E oil**. Vitamin E oil (by capsule) can be rubbed into the scar. Some studies seem to indicate that there is a benefit to this topical therapy. Other scars respond to pressure therapy in which **compression** is applied directly over the scar. **Silicone sheeting** can also be applied to a scar to help influence its outcome. It is expensive but seems to work well. This helps soften the scar and may decrease itching and redness.

Scar revision is not usually undertaken for a minimum of 4-6 months after injury at the earliest. During this maturation phase much improvement occurs. Makeup can be applied over a scar within two weeks of healing but should be applied only when approved by the surgeon. Sun exposure while the scar is red can lead to permanent hyperpigmentation. Use of sun block over the scarred area or the use of protective clothing will prevent most hyperpigmentation that is associated with sun exposure. An SPF 15 or greater sun block agent should be used.

