FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

Scar revision

Mr Jonathan Hayter FRCS, FDSRCS
Consultant Maxillofacial Surgeon

Spire Leicester Hospital
Gartree Road
Oadby
Leicester LE2 2FF

Nuffield Health
Leicester Hospital
Scraptoft Lane
Leicester LE5 1HY

BMI Meriden Hospital
University Hospital Site
Clifford Bridge Road
Coventry CV2 2LQ

Telephone: 0116 265 3037 / 3687
Email: kim.ward@spirehealthcare.com
Website: www.jonathanhayter.co.uk
SCAR REVISION INFORMATION

When a scar occur on the face the appearance may be embarrassing or can interfere with the normal function of a facial feature such as eyelid, nose or mouth. The aim of a scar revision operation is to modify the scar leaving an improved appearance and improved function.

What causes facial scars?

There are a number of causes including injuries, operations and infections.

Any injury to the facial soft tissues will heal with scarring. The cause will determine the type of scar, whether penetrating cuts, grazing with pigmentation or burns with contraction. Loss of tissue is likely to produce worse scars.

Operations around the face usually have incisions aligned to produce reasonable scars. However, some operations may require incisions in prominent areas and any incision may form a poor scar.

Cysts, arising from skin elements such as sebaceous glands, can become infected and produce unsightly scars. Infections from deeper facial structures, such as teeth, may track to the skin surface and produce scarring.

Any scar produced in childhood can enlarge and potentially worsen with growth.

What problems can facial scars cause?

Facial scars may be raised up or sunk and contracted. Both types alter the smooth skin surface producing an obvious deformity.

The main concern for some patients is the appearance with an obvious or unsightly scar causing embarrassment or attracting comments. Sometimes patients attempt to cover the scar with their hairstyle or their hand – particularly when meeting new people or having their photograph taken.

If situated close to a facial feature, such as the eye or mouth, a scar may cause distortion of that feature or interfere with normal movement.
**What treatments are available?**

Unsightly raised scars may be improved by silicone dressings, steroid injections, laser treatment or dermabrasion.

Other scars, especially if deep or contracted, may require surgical removal. Healthy skin may be moved into the old scar line to avoid contractures and it may be possible to move the scar line to a natural crease. Careful repair helps produce a more discreet scar.

**How do I find out if an operation is suitable?**

An initial consultation is essential.

Firstly, it helps establish what your concerns are and what are your aims for any treatment. Your medical details will be discussed as these may affect treatment.

Secondly, an examination can help establish a diagnosis and photographs may be taken at this stage.

Finally, treatment options can be discussed and you have an opportunity to ask any further questions.

**What if I want to go ahead with an operation?**

If treatment is straightforward excision of a scar or a minor revision procedure and you are happy with the proposed treatment then we can arrange a date for your operation.

If the treatment is more complex, such as a difficult scar revision procedure that may involve more than one operation, then you may wish to consider this treatment carefully and attend on a second occasion to ensure that this is the right treatment for you. Such treatment may have implications such as time off work.

**What happens during removal of a facial scar?**

Simple scar revisions may be suitable for treatment with a local anaesthetic (injection). When the skin is numb, the scar can be excised. Additional incisions may allow the line of the scar to be adjusted to follow the natural lines and contours of the face. The incisions are closed with fine stitches to help produce a discreet scar. A dressing may be placed, which can be removed after 24 hours.

A general anaesthetic in hospital may be required, particularly for more complicated procedures such as complex scar revisions. These are all individual and require detailed discussion.
What is it like after the procedure?

For most simple scar revisions, the area treated is not particularly painful and any discomfort can be treated with simple painkillers.

Any dressing can be removed after 24 hours and an antibiotic ointment put on the incision twice a day until the stitches are removed.

Swelling and bruising is common, particularly with procedures around the eyes or neck. This will usually settle during the first two weeks.

What will healing be like following my operation?

All scars are red during the first month. Scars tend to fade to pale pink within a few weeks and usually become very pale and discreet after a few months.

The operation will aim to produce a scar that is narrow and unobtrusive and aligned with your normal skin creases and contours. The goal is to produce an improved appearance that is better than the original scar.

Are there any complications after scar revision?

Most procedures settle quickly without problems but all operations carry some risk of side effects.

Infections occasionally occur. This is more common with smokers and diabetics and with more complicated operations or lesions that were previously infected. Antibiotics may be prescribed if there is an increased risk of infection.

Any infection tends to be minor and settles quickly with antibiotics. Wound healing can be affected but it is uncommon to require any treatment such as further scar revision.

Wounds can open along the incision line. Again, this is more common in smokers and diabetics and with more complicated operations or if the wound is infected, stretched or traumatised. These areas are usually limited and allowed to heal with regular dressings. They can heal surprisingly well and rarely require treatment such as further scar revision.

Any scar has the potential to develop a stretched or humped up appearance. This is usually a feature of an individuals healing ability and so is more likely if previous scars have healed in this way. African-Caribbean skin in particular has a tendency to form lumpy scars. Such scars can improve with age but may benefit from steroid injections, laser treatment or further scar revision. However, if an individual has a known history of forming poor scars then scar revision procedures are unlikely to provide significant improvements.
**How do I look after the area following treatment?**

After the stitches are removed the area should be cleaned gently for the first two or three weeks.

It is important to protect the area from the sun for the first six months with the use of a sun hat and high factor sun cream. This is good general advice for skin protection for the future.

Smoking can delay healing and should be stopped for at least six weeks following the operation. It is good general advice to reduce or stop smoking in the future to reduce the adverse affects on the skin.

**How do you make an appointment to discuss scar revision?**

A doctor’s letter is helpful, although not essential, for an initial appointment. Please contact Kim Ward to arrange an appointment either by:

- Telephone; 0116 265 3037 / 3687
- Or email: kim.ward@spirehealthcare.com