

Scar Revision.... Is it Right For Me?

Scars are visible signs that remain after a wound has healed. They are unavoidable results of injury or surgery, and their development can be unpredictable. Poor healing may contribute to scars that are obvious, unsightly, or disfiguring. Even a wound that heals well can result in a scar that affects your appearance. Scars may be raised or recessed, different in color or texture from surrounding healthy tissue or particularly noticeable due to their size, shape, or location.

Scar revision is meant to minimize the scar so that it is more consistent with your surrounding skin tone and texture. Although scar revision can provide a more pleasing cosmetic result or improve a scar that has healed poorly, a scar cannot be completely erased.

Scar revision is a highly individualized procedure and you should do it for yourself, not to fulfill someone else's desires or to try to fit any sort of ideal image. Scar revision can be performed on people of any age and is a good option for you if:

- You are bothered by a scar anywhere on your body
- You are physically healthy
- You do not smoke

- You have a positive outlook and realistic goals for your scar revision surgery
- You do not have active acne or other skin diseases in the area to be treated

The success and safety of your scar revision procedure depends very much on your complete candidness during your consultation. You'll be asked a number of questions about your health, desires and goals, medical history, and lifestyle habits.

Types of scars

- **Discoloration, surface irregularities,** and other more subtle scars can be cosmetically improved by surgery or other treatments recommended by your plastic surgeon. These types of scars do not impair function or cause physical discomfort and include acne scars as well as scars resulting from minor injury and prior surgical incisions.
- **Hypertrophic scars** are thick clusters of scar tissue that develop directly at a wound site. They are often raised, red, and/or uncomfortable, and they may become wider over time. They can be hyperpigmented (darker in color) or hypopigmented (lighter in color).

- **Keloids** are larger than hypertrophic scars. They can be painful or itchy, and may also pucker. They extend beyond the edges of an original wound or incision. Keloids can occur anywhere on your body, but they develop more commonly where there is little underlying fatty tissue, such as on the face, neck, ears, chest or shoulders.
- **Contractures** are scars that restrict movement due to skin and underlying tissue that pull together during healing. They can occur when there is a large amount of tissue loss, such as after a burn. Contractures also can form where a wound crosses a joint, restricting movement of the fingers, elbows, knees, or neck.

Treatments

The degree of improvement that can be achieved with scar revision will depend on the severity of your scarring, and the type, size and location of the scar. In some cases, a single technique may provide significant improvement. However, your plastic surgeon may recommend a combination of scar revision techniques to achieve the best results.

- **Topical treatments,** such as gels, tapes or external compression, can



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help in wound closure and healing, or to reduce the ability of skin to produce irregular pigment. These products may be used to treat existing surface scars and discoloration, and to aid in healing of scar revision procedures.

- **Injectable treatments** are often used to fill depressed or concave scars. Depending on the injectable substance used and your particular scar conditions, results may last from three months to several years. Therapy must be repeated to maintain results.
- **Surface treatments** are most often used for cosmetic improvement of scars. These methods can soften surface irregularities and reduce uneven pigmentation. Surface treatments are a controlled means of either mechanically removing the top layers of skin or changing the nature of tissue.

These treatment options include:

- **Dermabrasion** is a mechanical polishing of the skin.
- **Laser or light therapy** causes changes to the surface of the skin that allow new, healthy skin to form at the scar site.

- **Chemical peel solutions** penetrate the skin's surface to soften irregularities in texture and color.
- **Skin bleaching agents** are medications applied topically to lighten the skin.
- **Surgery** is sometimes necessary for the improvement of scars especially if non-surgical means are not possible or successful. Often the scar is excised and then closed in layers adjusting the tension or orientation of the scar. Advanced techniques with flap closure or repositioning of the scar in a natural crease sometimes make it less conspicuous. More advanced techniques, such as tissue substitutes/skin grafting or tissue expansion, may be necessary if the scar is more complex.

For more information regarding scar revision or other procedures, contact Dr. Chad Tattini—309-664-1007, Dr. Laura Randolph—309-664-6222, or Dr. Paige Holt—309-664-4444 at Twin City Plastic Surgery or www.twincityplasticsurgery.com. Their office is located at 2502 E. Empire in Bloomington.

Submitted by Chad Tattini MD

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