

# Aesthetics

## Scar Revision

A scar is part of the body's healing process and can be a result of a birth defect, accident, acne or surgery. Visible scarring can affect self-esteem and confidence, with some going to great lengths to cover up such scars.

### What is a scar?

The majority of what makes up a scar is a protein called collagen. When a scar first forms it is usually red and lumpy because it is immature. As the scar ages it matures, the collagen softens and the redness reduces, usually leaving a thinner, flatter white scar. This is a 'normal' scar. An abnormal scar would be one that remains red, raised, itchy or sore after sufficient time has elapsed to allow it to settle, usually 9-12 months.

### Why are some scars red, lumpy, itchy or sore?

Some people are genetically predisposed to forming abnormal scars. People, with very fair or very dark complexions have a genetic tendency to make abnormal scars. Problems with wound healing such as infections, wound breakdown, or retained stitches can also lead to an abnormal scar.

### What problems do scars create?

Scars can be a problem because of their location, size, colour or consistency.

- **Location** There are things that can be done to make scars less noticeable, however a scar on the face is more noticeable than one on the back, which can be more easily covered up.
- **Size:** Sometimes a scar heals so that it appears widened or flat. A typical scar like this would be from a burn. Wide scars can sometimes be narrowed by removing them and re-stitching to give a thinner scar.
- **Colour:** Young scars are often red when they first form and go pale with time. Some scars however remain red or take on a brown colour. It may be possible to lighten the colour using lasers to make the scar less obvious. Make-up can also be used to camouflage the scar if it is flat.
- **Consistency:** Scars can feel hard and lumpy. Again, this is often the case with immature scars, but those that remain hard and lumpy may need treatment to help soften and flatten them.

The Stratford Clinic, Alcester Road,  
Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6PP

TEL: 01789 412 994

EMAIL: [enquiry@thestratfordclinic.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@thestratfordclinic.co.uk)

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## **Can a scar be removed?**

A scar can never be removed completely. However, it can sometimes be made to look less noticeable, using the methods described below.

## **Do I have to have surgery to improve my scar?**

No, not all treatments for scars include surgery. Non-surgical therapies that can improve scars include moisturising and massage, using silicone gel, or steroid injections. Steroid injections are only used if the scar remains raised, itchy or painful.

## **What can surgery do to improve a scar?**

Surgery can help to improve the appearance or quality of a scar in several ways. If a scar runs in across the natural skin creases it can be divided up into zig-zags to make it look less noticeable. This is called a Z-plasty. If a scar is flat and wide, it can be removed and re-stitched so that it is narrower. If this is not possible, a skin substitute or skin graft may be needed.

## **What should I do if I am considering treatment for my scars?**

Consultant Aesthetic and Plastic Surgeon Mr Matt Venus is available for consultation and treatment at The Stratford Clinic (charges will apply). If you are using Private Medical Insurance you will require a GP referral.

For more information visit: [www.thestratfordclinic.co.uk](http://www.thestratfordclinic.co.uk) or call: 01789 412 994

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