

Managing scars after heart surgery

Scar Massage

Before starting

- Check with a health professional that the wound has healed
- Don't massage if there are any signs of weeping or bleeding

Massage method

Massage at least 3 times per day for 5 to 10 minutes at a time as follows:

- Use moisturisers such as vitamin E cream, sorbolene, or bio oil
- Use the ball of the thumb and move in circular motions applying sufficient pressure to blanch the finger nail
- Rub the skin and deep tissue around the scar but avoid rubbing the surface over scar.

Managing a tender scar

A scar can become very sensitive to touch during the healing process. A tightly fitted singlet or T-shirt can help by reducing stimulation of the skin over the chest.

Other ways to make the scar area less tender include the following de-sensitisation techniques:

1. Tap the edges of the scar with fingertips every few hours
2. Massage the scar area regularly

3. Touch and wipe the sensitive area with a variety of different textures, ranging from soft textures such as cotton wool and silk to rough textures such as calico and towelling
4. Start by wiping the scar with the texture that you are able to tolerate for up to 10 mins
5. Once a texture is tolerated for 10 minutes progress to a slightly more harsher texture
6. Stop when the area is irritated and go back to using the previous more tolerable texture
7. Build up the tolerance until you can touch the area without irritation and you can tolerate wearing normal clothing without feeling uncomfortable.

Seek professional advice if:

- The scar is thick or raised, very sensitive, or not improving
- You notice a change in redness, swelling, tenderness or a discharge developing
- The scar has not settled after 6 months.