

## Burn information

# Scar management

The treatment of burns and scalds is aimed at the reduction of scarring, preventing disability, reducing the need for further surgery and producing a better cosmetic result. This information aims to answer queries you may have in regard to your child's treatment.

### Massaging

Scar tissue contains tiny fibres that cling together in an irregular pattern. Massaging the scars helps to break up the fibres in them, leaving the skin more supple and smooth in appearance.

Massage the scars in small circular patterns for the best effect. The pressure of the massage is dependent on the stage of scar healing. Generally over time the scar can tolerate increased pressure, until skin blanching occurs during massage. It is recommended that all scars are massaged twice a day, for about 15 minutes. Longer massages may be required for larger areas of scar tissue.

Scars can be very sensitive to touch, however, exposure to massage will often help reduce skin sensitivity. Extra care when washing helps to prevent a build-up of cream on the skin which could lead to dirt, blackheads, pimples, etc. Massaging with cream is a vital part of aftercare treatment that helps replace the skin oils lost due to the burn injury. Failure to moisturise scars can result in dry, cracked skin that can lead to new wounds and further scarring.

A non-perfumed moisturising cream such as Sorbolene with 10% glycerine is recommended for most burn scars. Please speak to your burns team if you have questions. If required, 'oily glycerol' can be provided (contains almond oil) for scars that require more than moisturising massage to maintain soft, supple scars.

### Colour changes of scars

Over a period of time, the scar matures and its colour fades. Once a scar resembles the normal skin colour, it is considered to be mature, no longer requiring routine scar management techniques.

It is important to watch for areas which become an angry red colour as this may indicate infection or potential breakdown of the area. If this occurs, it is important for a review to be organised with the PCH Burns Service team.

Colour changes are common and may be very marked. If your child becomes either warm or cold, the scarring can become a dark purple colour. This is due to its increased blood supply and is harmless. Similarly, injuries on the legs and feet will become purple when the child stands for long periods.



Pigment is slow to return to burn scars and requires regular review with the Burns team to monitor for hypo (low) or hyper (high) pigmentation.

## Sun care

Following any skin injury it is very important to protect the area from the sun. Scar tissue needs to be protected from the sun for at least two years after the initial injury. Please see additional health fact sheet, "Sun protection for burn scars".

## Itching

Itching is a result of damage to the skin during injury and repair. The oil glands within the skin do not produce as much oil as usual, leading to skin dehydration. Relief may be offered by:

- ensuring your child wears the pressure garments
- massaging with cream
- making sure your child wears polyester or cotton clothes. It is advisable to avoid nylon and wool as these could make the child hotter and increase the itching.
- Medical assistance may also be beneficial if itching continues over prolonged periods. Please see additional information on "Burn itch and discomfort at home".

## Blistering

Small blisters containing clear fluid or blood may occur on the burned areas. This is often a result of itching during sleep or rubbing against a scar. They are common in the early weeks after injury and then tend to appear less frequently. In this case, dressings are required to prevent infection and further wound breakdown. Please call PCH Ward 1B immediately for advice and to arrange a follow up appointment. If your child has 'pressure garments' these may need reviewing and re-measuring by the Occupational Therapy team.

## Blackheads, pimples and whiteheads

Blackheads are a common problem. They are often caused by cream, soap, dirt, etc. collecting in the pockets of the uneven surface of the grafted area. They will become less frequent as time passes. Pimples and whiteheads can be caused by an excess of cream or a reaction to products used. Ensuring excess cream is wiped off following massage will help manage this problem. These areas need review as it may indicate infection and need urgent attention.

For further information, or if you have any questions, please contact your Occupational Therapist on 6456 0409 or PCH Ward 1B on 6456 3630.

**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.**

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