Taking care of my scars with massage

You have scars caused by surgery or tearing of the skin. This fact sheet explains how to massage them.

Why should I massage my scars?

After surgery, the cuts are closed and scars form. This is part of the healing process. During scar formation, the skin can stick to muscles and tissues under the skin. The places where this happens are called “adhesions”. By massaging your scars, you will unstick your skin to avoid this problem.

How will these massages help me?

> Your skin will be softer.
> You will have less pain and discomfort.
> You will be able to move more easily.
> Your scars will be less red, less sensitive, and less swollen.

When should I start doing the massages?

You should start massaging your scars as soon as they are fully healed. Generally, you should wait for 3 weeks after surgery. But that depends on the depth and size of the scars. The incisions should be closed and the stitches gone. There should be no scab and no fluid leaking.

If you have any doubts about whether your scar is healed, talk to your doctor, nurse, or physiotherapist.

How often should I do these massages?

Massage your scars once or twice a day for 5 to 10 minutes.

Is it normal to feel pain when I massage my scars?

It is normal to feel some discomfort during the massages. But this feeling should not be more than 4 out of 10 on the pain scale (see notes on page 4). If you feel more pain than this, do the massage for less time and use less pressure. The massage should always be gentle and slow.

Massaging the scars will make them less visible.
How do I massage my scars?

1. **PREPARE YOURSELF**
   - Wash your hands well with soap and water.
   - Sit or lie in a comfortable position. The area to be massaged should be easy to reach and well supported. For example, if you have a scar on your chest, you can sit in your bed, with your back resting against the headboard.

2. **MASSAGE THE SCARS**
   - With your index and middle fingers, press on the scar and make circles. Your fingers should not rub the skin. It’s the skin that moves, guided by your fingers.
   - Do the same thing, this time moving the skin from top to bottom and bottom to top, rather than in circles.
   - Keep on doing this, but now move the skin from right to left and left to right.
4– Then, put your fingers on both sides of the scar. Gently lift the scar to try to unstick the skin from the tissues and muscles underneath.

Massage the scars for 5 to 10 minutes, doing each movement about 10 times.

5– Apply a small amount of perfume-free hydrating cream or lotion.

Are there any precautions I should take?
Stop the massage if there is any fluid oozing from the scar. Apply a wound closure dressing such as a Steri-Strip if there is any light bleeding.

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?
You can contact the members of your care team.

Often, a cream made with vitamin E is recommended because it could help the scar to heal better.

USEFUL RESOURCES
Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.
You can also find them on our web site chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l’Université de Montréal chumontreal.qc.ca
### Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don’t forget anything.

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### Pain management

Use this chart to manage your pain level. You can print out full-page charts from: [chumontreal.qc.ca/painchart.pdf](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/painchart.pdf)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date / Time</th>
<th>Pain (level)</th>
<th>Activity, medication, etc...</th>
<th>Comments (effects on pain, etc.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-05, 9 p.m.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2 Tylenols</td>
<td>A bit better. Pain = 5/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>12-05, 9:30 p.m.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Relaxation - reading</td>
<td>Feeling better. Pain = 3/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Pain scale

You want to keep your pain level at 4 or lower. Unrelieved pain will be harder to control.

- 0: No pain
- 1: No pain
- 2: Mild pain
- 3: Moderate pain
- 4: Severe pain
- 5: Very severe pain
- 6: Extremely severe pain
- 7: Pain you can imagine
- 8: Pain you can imagine
- 9: Pain you can imagine
- 10: Worst pain you can imagine

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[chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)