Taking care of my scars with massage

You have scars caused by surgery or an injury. This fact sheet explains how to massage them.

Why should I massage my scars?

After surgery, the incisions 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 more flexible.
> You will have less pain, discomfort and itching.
> You will be able to move more easily.
> Your scars will be less red, less sensitive, and less swollen.

Massaging the scars will make them less visible.

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 concerns about your scar's healing, 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 NotePad 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.

How do I massage my scars?

1 PREPARE YOURSELF
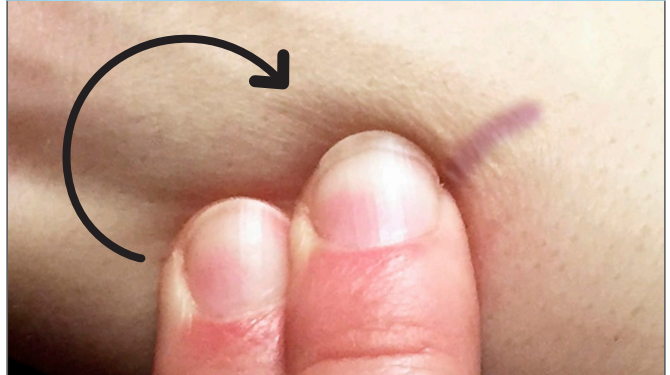

1 Wash your hands well with soap and water.

2 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.
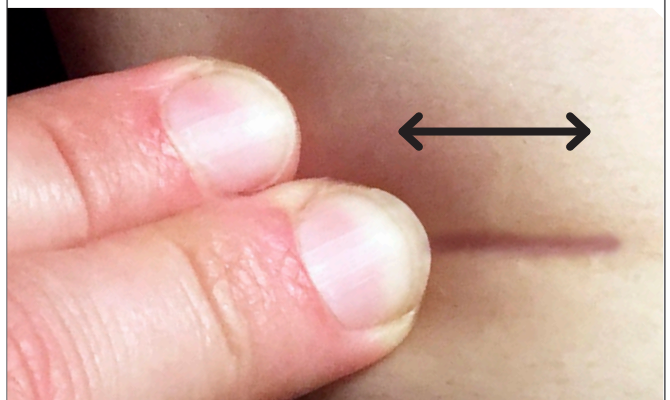
2 MASSAGE THE SCARS

1 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

2 Do the same thing, this time moving the skin from top to bottom and bottom to top, rather than in circles.

3 Keep on doing this, but now move the skin from right to left and left to right.

② MASSAGE THE SCARS

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.

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

Sheets of silicone can be applied to a scar to improve its flexibility and appearance. However, a prescription is needed and there may be a cost. Talk with your care team about this.

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.

Can I expose my scar to the sun?

Yes, but use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Newly formed skin is very sensitive to sunlight. Exposed without protection, the scar can become discolored or thicken.

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

You can contact the members of your care team.

📌 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 website **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

NOTEPAD

CHUM

? Questions

> Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.
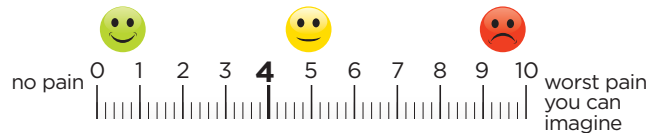
🕐 Pain management

> Use this chart to manage your pain level. You can print out full-page charts from: **chumontreal.qc.ca/painchart.pdf**

Examples

Date / Time	Pain (level))	Activity, medication, etc...	Comments (effects on pain, etc.)
12-05, 9 p.m.	7	2 Tylenols	A bit better. Pain = 5/10
12-05, 9:30 p.m.	5	Relaxation – reading	Feeling better. Pain = 3/10

Pain scale

no pain 0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9 10 worst pain you can imagine

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

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