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What do silicone sheets do for scars

Scarring is a part of every surgery and is very important to many patients for a variety of reasons: Scars may be painful, itchy or unsightly. Below is a list of common topical agents that are available over-the-counter for scarring. Most incisions will heal to a thin, cosmetically acceptable scar without using any of the agents described below. However, if you would like to use a topical agent to improve healing and the cosmetic appearance of your scar, we recommend a silicone-based product. See below for additional details. If you're short on time, you can skip to the summary. Silicone Silicones are synthetic polymers that can be a liquid, gel, or rubber. Findings Several studies illustrate that treatment of hypertrophic and keloid scars with silicone gel improves the appearance and bulk of the scars, especially in patients with burns. The superiority of one form of silicone gel dressing over another is not clear. Although both silicone gel sheeting and silicone gels improved scars, studies indicate no significant difference between the two forms. Silicone dressings are believed to decrease scars via wound hydration, increased static charge, and modulation of growth factors. Materials other than silicones (i.e., polyurethane) have shown to be equally effective in the treatment of hypertrophic scars. Both silicone and non-silicone gel dressings have been effective in reducing scar size, induration, and symptoms, but no significant differences have been noted between treatment with silicone and treatment with non-silicone gel dressings. Bottom Line: There is good evidence showing the efficacy and safety of topical silicone for the treatment of hypertrophic and keloid scars. Silicone gel may improve the thickness, color, and texture of scars, especially thick ones. Although early treatment is ideal, silicone gel sheeting may still be beneficial for older scars. Patients who wish to use silicone gel for scar management should apply it to the scar for 8 to 24 hours per day. It may take several months to see improvement. Vitamin E Vitamin E preparations are probably the most popular for use in improving the cosmetic appearance of scars. Belief Basis Early studies showed that vitamin E, applied topically, penetrates deep into the dermis and subcutaneous tissue, which is likely what led to the idea that vitamin E may improve wound healing when applied topically. When the skin is injured, free oxygen radicals are released in the inflammatory phase and may affect healing. In theory, Vitamin E could reduce free radicals by its antioxidant activity, thus enhancing wound healing. Findings Research on the effects of vitamin E on skin healing is sparse. Studies have shown that topically applied vitamin E provides no more effect than other emollient-type ointments, and hydration appears to be its only beneficial effect. Interestingly, topical vitamin E may actually cause more harm than good, possibly worsening a scar's appearance and causing contact dermatitis, contact urticaria, and erythema multiform-like reactions in some patients. A recent report from Widegrove has highlighted the skin irritation and reduced tensile strength caused by vitamin E. Use of vitamin E later on in the scar's maturity (4 to 6 weeks and later) may flatten the scar because of its hydrative capabilities, but it may result in a stretched and weakened scar because of its decreased strength effect on the scar; and if used too early, wound separation can occur. Bottom Line: Although many patients believe vitamin E speeds wound healing and improves the look of a scar, current research evidence does not support this idea. In fact, studies report adverse effects with use of vitamin E. We discourage patients from using topical vitamin E on healing wounds and scars. Onion Extract Another popular and heavily marketed over-the-counter scar treatment consists of onion extract in a topical gel, which has been marketed as a product to improve scar appearance and texture (Mederma, Metz Pharmaceuticals). Theories The mechanism of onion extract seems to reside in its antihistamine properties. The theory behind this is that a compound that blocks histamine release may decrease collagen production by fibroblasts, resulting in reduced scar volume and normalization of the scar maturation process. The cosmetic result is a decrease in scar redness and hypertrophy. Findings Wounds treated with Mederma did show significantly better improvement of collagen organization. However, a prospective, double-blind study of Caucasian males demonstrated that the effects of topical onion extract on cosmetic appearance, erythema, and hypertrophy of scars in new surgical scars were equivalent to those of petroleum emollient. Bottom Line: Products containing onion extract (i.e., Mederma) do not improve scar symptoms and have not shown any benefit over petroleum emollients. Applying this product to scars will probably not cause any harm, but will also probably not improve them. Honey Honey has been used as a dressing for wounds and burns for centuries. Theories Honey's effects on wound healing are theorized to be from its antibacterial activity in addition to its hydrating properties. Findings A review of 22 clinical trials involving more than 2,000 patients concluded that honey rapidly clears existing wound infections and protects against further infection, reduces swelling, minimizes scarring, removes infected and dead tissue, and speeds healing by stimulating new tissue growth. Bottom Line: More well-designed, double-blind controlled trials in humans are needed, but preliminary studies are promising regarding honey and its wound-healing and scar-improvement properties. Applying honey to a healing wound or existing scar has not been shown to be harmful and may speed healing and improve scar appearance. What works? The bottom line To summarize, silicone gel has the most data behind it as an efficacious topical, over-the-counter treatment option for scars, and is an option for patients who want something they can buy themselves. Also, there is probably not any harm, and possibly some benefit, to rubbing honey onto healing wounds and scars. Further controlled studies involving human subjects are needed for topical, natural preparations for scars, so in the meantime, we recommend that patients not waste time or money on other "natural" products that claim to improve the look of scars. Sample Products: Silicone-Based Scar Therapy Scars come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. And as much as they have a bad reputation, they're part of the body's healing process. Scarring is normal, necessary, and the consequence of "inflammatory cells coming in to stop bleeding, prevent infection, and lay down new collagen to 'close' the wound," explains Cybele Fishman, a board-certified dermatologist and assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital. Unfortunately, scars do sometimes end up being a cosmetic concern, according to Dr. Jody A. Levine, the director of dermatology at Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC. We tend to pay particular attention to scarring on our faces, like the average acne scar or hyperpigmentation. But here, we're focusing on helping you treat scars that form after a surgery or significant injury, typically on the body. Surgery scars tend to be linear because they form from wounds that are created in a controlled setting. "This maximizes the chance for a less noticeable scar," Levine says, while scars from injuries tend to be less predictable. Experts agree that in-office laser treatments are the most effective way to improve the appearance of scars. "Lasers can target pigment in the scar or help remodel the collagen to heal the scar texture," board-certified dermatologist Dr. Anna Karp told us. More recently, microneedling has been a popular in-office treatment for scarring, especially ones caused by acne, according to Fishman. The process uses "fine needles to mechanically disrupt the skin and cause a controlled wound, which then sets about repair mechanisms in your skin to build more collagen and elastic tissue." That doesn't mean there aren't ways to help heal scars at home. "The goal is to treat wounds early and well to prevent the formation of a hypertrophic scar, which is a raised scar that stays within the confines of the wound," explains dermatologist Anita Cela, who specializes in cosmetic dermatology. To help, we talked to dermatologists about the most effective over-the-counter products for getting rid of scars, plus what to use to prevent a scar from forming in the first place. Because there is no all-in-one, holy-grail scar treatment, we've instead organized their recommendations into an easy to follow step-by-step guide to treating scars. The first line of defense is to keep the wound clean, moist, and covered in the early hours, days, and weeks — before you even start using a scar treatment. "Don't let the wound get infected," cautions Dr. Kenneth Howe of Wexler Dermatology. "This may necessitate the use of a topical antibiotic like bacitracin ointment, which is especially important if the wound occurred with concomitant contamination" — for example, a road-rash injury from skateboarding. (Polysporin contains bacitracin zinc in addition to a second antibiotic, polymyxin B, though you can get ointments that contain just bacitracin.) After you've treated the wound with antibiotics, Dr. Jennifer Chwalek, who practices with Union Square Laser Dermatology, says that "you want to keep the wound hydrated with something like Aquaphor, as this promotes faster healing." It's a myth that you want to air out the wound and let it dry, because that will form a scab, which can cause more scarring and take longer to heal. "Avoid wound breakdown," adds Howe. "Proper wound dressing can help in this regard." Aquaphor is also a favorite of Dr. Rachel Nazarian, a dermatologist at Schweiger Dermatology Group, for its infection prevention and protection that stimulates the healing of wounds. DermaSciences Medihoney Gel Wound and & Burn Dressing "Honey has been used for centuries for wound healing because of its antibacterial and hydrating properties, especially in burn wounds," says dermatologist Adeline Kikam, founder of @brownskinderm, a platform dedicated to skin care and dermatology information in skin of color. While there haven't been many studies on how honey heals wounds, Kikam says that new research suggests it can help with scar reduction, so she says it's worth trying on mild wounds and burns. Fishman seconded this sentiment, saying that honey features antimicrobial compounds and an acidic pH, which helps with wound-healing. Neosporin Antibiotic First-Aid Ointment It's critical to clean a wound when it first happens, and any foreign materials — think bits of gravel or dirt — can cause even worse scarring and long-term discoloration, according to Dr. Melissa Doft of Doft Plastic Surgery. Once a wound is clean, Doft suggests maintaining a moist (but not wet) environment around it. She's a fan of Neosporin for its antibiotic qualities. This particular formula is designed to minimize the look of scars along with providing itch relief. Curativa Bay 02% Hypochlorous Skin Spray Karp agrees that your top priority should be keeping the area around a scar clean, and she prefers hypochlorous-acid sprays to prevent bacterial growth, explaining that this antibacterial and anti-inflammatory acid is actually naturally found in our bodies (thanks to our white blood cells) and that most people aren't sensitive to it, either. EltaMD UV Clear Broad-Spectrum SPF 46 Protecting the wound from the sun is also key. That's especially true of newer wounds, since "some protection is essential for the first six months while the scar is remodeling and healing," Doft explains. "The sun is your enemy and will impede good wound healing and worsen the scar," says Fishman. Evan Rieder, a board-certified dermatologist and faculty member in the Ronald O. Perleman Department of Dermatology at NYU Langone (he's also board-certified in psychiatry), agrees: "Any sort of exposure will make the scar darker." Rieder recommends sunscreen with physical blockers, or those that contain active mineral ingredients, like zinc and titanium. Howe says that "a fresh wound or scar is more prone to sunburn than normal skin," and that "a titanium- or zinc-containing sunscreen that's at least an SPF 30 should be applied daily." He and Cela recommend sunscreens from EltaMD, which happens to be a Strategist favorite. ScarAway Silicone Scar Sheets The ideal time to start treating the scar is a week or two after an injury or a surgical incision. All our experts recommend using silicone-based patches (called sheeting) or gels (more on those to come) to treat scars in the early stages of formation. "Silicone sheets are very effective in treating scars, providing an optimal dressing for helping scars heal," says Karp. These are more effective than popular onion-extract-based products like Mederma. According to Howe, silicone-based topicals are "the simplest OTC treatment for raised, or hypertrophic, scars." He says that they work "by exerting a small amount of compressive pressure on the scar, making it flatten and/or soften." Although there aren't definitive medical studies that prove that silicone works best, the dermatologists we spoke to said there are studies and other evidence that show that applying silicone products on a daily basis helps scars mature appropriately and minimizes cosmetic damage. Dermatologist Caroline Robinson, founder of Tone Dermatology, says the theory behind silicone is that it "mimics our skin barrier and it really helps to lock and trap moisture." Chwalek, Karp, Cela, and Fishman all recommend ScarAway, which comes in sheets (as well as a gel). The sheets are self-adhesive, making them a convenient overnight treatment (no gel-covered skin touching your sheets), and reusable. Consistency — and patience — is key when using silicone sheets. Kikam says you must be able to commit to wearing them anywhere from 8-24 hours each day (changing out the sheet daily) for several months to see results. Experts add that ScarAway sheets may also help minimize the appearance of old scars too. ScarAway Silicone Sheets for C-Sections For those recovering from a C-section, Fishman particularly likes these strips, which are conveniently precut to the length and width of the average C-section scar. "Every woman who has a C-section should use silicone sheets, in my opinion," says Fishman, who adds that those scars have a high rate of becoming hypertrophic (raised and often red in color). CICA-Care Silicone Gel Sheeting 12cm X 15cm Howe agrees that silicone-based sheets are an effective treatment. He particularly likes these ones, which he says are easy to use: "The sheets are self-adhesive, so no cumbersome dressing or bandages are required. Just trim the sheet to a size slightly larger than the scar to be treated, and apply overnight." Like ScarAway's sheets, he says, "the silicone in these exerts a gentle pressure that flattens raised-up scars." Elliot Weiss, a dermatologist at the Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York, also recommends CICA-Care silicone sheets, adding that they're especially "useful to prevent hypertrophic or thickened scars." Strataderm Scar Therapy Gel 10g For smaller or irregularly shaped wounds, you might prefer using a silicone-based gel over a sheet. When it comes to gels, Howe and Dr. Adarsh Vijay Mudgil of Mudgil Dermatology both recommend Strataderm. "It consists of a blend of silicones in a topical gel that you put on once daily without any sticky mess," says Howe. The transparent gel both hydrates and protects scars, while the pressure from the silicone helps raised scars that "contain a good deal more collagen than normal skin" become "flatter and less hard," according to Howe. Strataderm can also help reduce redness. Mudgil agrees that "topical gels containing silicone can improve the appearance of scars by reducing thickness and redness." He likes Strataderm because it's "quick drying" and "does not contain any ingredients that can cause allergy or irritation," but notes, "tropical treatments really only provide benefit in the very early stages of scar formation." During this time, Mudgil advises applying any gel to a scar daily. Revision C+ Correcting Complex 30 Even after wounds have healed, you may still be dealing with hyperpigmentation. According to Robinson, these areas of discoloration — commonly seen with acne scars — are often caused by underlying inflammation. "There is often some component of inflammation under the surface of the skin that's allowing that hyperpigmentation to be persistent," she says. To treat these red and brown spots, she looks for products rich in antioxidants that improve both hyperpigmentation and the skin's overall health. She likes the Revision C+ Correcting Complex serum because "it addresses both brown and red spots, and it addresses skin quality through the antioxidant function." Actually good deals, smart shopping advice, and exclusive discounts. The Strategist is designed to surface the most useful, expert recommendations for things to buy across the vast e-commerce landscape. Some of our latest conquests include the best acne treatments, rolling luggage, pillows for side sleepers, natural anxiety remedies, and bath towels. We update links when possible, but note that deals can expire and all prices are subject to change. Every editorial product is independently selected. If you buy something through our links, New York may earn an affiliate commission. why do silicone sheets help scars. what does silicone sheets do for scars. do silicone sheets really help scars

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