

## **Scar Control Clinic Hamilton General Hospital**

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The Hamilton Health Sciences Burn Unit operates an outpatient Scar Control Clinic for children and adults. The clinic is located on the Burn Trauma Unit on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Hamilton General Hospital. An occupational therapist or physiotherapist will assess your scar and discuss different treatment options.

Before you leave the hospital, you will be given an appointment for the Scar Control Clinic. Please arrive on time for your appointment. If you have to reschedule your appointment, please call 905-527-4332, ext. 46350.

### **Why is hypertrophic burn scarring?**

After a deep burn, the new skin can thicken and become raised over time. This is called hypertrophic scarring. Hypertrophic scarring can develop when a scar is “active”. A scar can remain active anywhere from 6 months up to 2 years following a burn injury. Hypertrophic scars can be uncomfortable, and can result in decreased movement in your joints.

### **How can scarring be controlled?**

Scars can be kept flat and smooth by wearing a custom pressure garment. You will need to wear your garment for 23 hours a day for the best results. Through the Assistive Devices Program, 75% of the cost of pressure garments is covered. Other options used to prevent scar thickening include scar massage and gel sheets.

### **When can scar control be started?**

Scar control can begin as soon as the burn wound heals. To prepare your skin for pressure garments, tubigrip and tensor bandages may be started while you are still in hospital. When your skin is ready, an occupational therapist or physiotherapist can measure you for a custom-made pressure garment if needed at your Scar Control Clinic appointment.

## **How long am I at risk for hypertrophic scarring?**

The redness, firmness and potential for thickening of scars can last from 6 months to 2 years. Pressure garments are worn when the scars are still red or raised. Once the scars have become pale, pressure garments are no longer needed. Your therapist will help determine when you no longer need to wear a pressure garment.

## **How do I protect my new, healed skin?**

Your new skin and scars are delicate and will injure easily. Hitting or rubbing the skin can cause blisters or small open areas.

Follow these guidelines:

- Wash healed skin at least daily with mild soap and water.
- Do not pop any blisters, your skin will absorb the blister within a few days.
- Avoid sun exposure and use a water-based sunblock with SPF 30 or higher. Reapply often.
- Apply Nivea lotion or any water-based moisturizing cream to healed skin 2 to 3 times a day or as needed.
- Avoid perfume, aftershave and scented creams or lotions.

## **Exercise and stretching**

As your burn heals, the new skin is tight and not as elastic as normal skin. Stretching the skin is very important if your burns are over joints. If you do not stretch the skin regularly, your movement may become restricted over time. Stretching begins while the burn wounds are still open, and needs to continue even after the new skin is healed. Stretching must be done every hour to be most effective.

Your therapist will show you what stretches to do to prevent stiffness and skin tightening.