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CAN YOU MAKE SCARS VANISH?

THERE are a host of treatments that claim to reduce and improve the look of scars, but do any of them work?

'The skill of the surgeon is key to the way your scar will eventually look,' says Niall Kirkpatrick, a plastic surgeon at Chelsea and Westminster and the Royal Marsden Hospitals.

'But there are steps you can take to help, and they must be performed during the maturation process — once stitches have been removed and the scar has started to heal.'

Here, he reviews various treatments, which we then rated. (Remember, you should always talk to your surgeon or doctor before starting a treatment).

Bio Oil

From £8.95/125ml, available from pharmacies and supermarkets

IT CONTAINS PurCellin oil, a rapidly absorbed 'dry' oil that acts as a carrier for skin-friendly vitamins A and E, and herbal oils (lavender, calendula, rosemary and chamomile). These are said to penetrate into the second layer of the skin, helping to moisturise and ensure elasticity.

VERDICT: 'Despite its popularity, I'm not aware of any good scientific evidence to show that this product works. It's unlikely that the ingredients are deeply absorbed, as the skin is a highly efficient barrier which stops most things applied to it — including vitamins — getting in.'

However, oil might help to keep the skin hydrated, explaining why users see an improvement in their look.

RATING: 5/10



Kelo-cote advanced formula scar gel

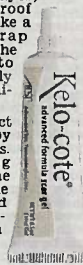
£29.99/15g, kelo-cote.co.uk

THIS silicone-based gel claims to soften and smooth all types of scars.

Apply a very thin layer; this forms a waterproof membrane that acts like a second skin to trap moisture and hydrate the scar, which helps to flatten it out. Apply twice daily for a minimum of 60 days.

VERDICT: 'This product has been widely used by surgeons for many years. There is increasing evidence that silicone ointments like this one — particularly if used after an aqueous moisturising cream — can help to keep the scar hydrated. It can be a bit sticky to use, however.'

RATING: 9/10



Active FX laser

From £2,000, cadoganclinic.com, 020 7901 8500

THIS 'CO2 fractional' laser delivers thousands of tiny, precise pulses, leaving small 'bridges' of untouched skin in between. This leads to faster healing and recovery.

VERDICT: 'A laser like this one may help to smooth some scarring, but is unlikely to make scars disappear altogether.'

'How the fractional aspect of the laser works is still unclear. Laser treatments can be extremely powerful and cause severe damage to the skin if improperly handled. Go to a properly qualified doctor for a treatment like this.'

RATING: 6/10



Boots Scar Reduction Patches

£19.99 for 21, boots.com

BASED on the silicone sheets some hospitals put on wounds to improve scarring, these self-adhesive silicone patches are infused with fruit extracts and probiotics. Apply for a minimum of 12 hours a day for a minimum of three weeks.

VERDICT: 'The hydrating silicone in these sheets has been shown to help scars mature well. The only problem is they don't tend to adhere particularly well to the skin — and you wouldn't want to wear them on the face. The fruit extracts and probiotics will make little or no difference to the healing process.'

RATING: 4/10



Medik8 Titanium Dermalroller

From £250 per treatment, 020 8997 8941, SkinBraids.co.uk

A HAND-HELLED roller covered in tiny gold-plated, titanium micro-needles is run over the skin, causing thousands of pin prick wounds which trigger the production of new collagen (the protein that gives skin its plumpness and elasticity). A course of three treatments taken at six to eight week intervals is generally recommended.

VERDICT: 'I have seen impressive improvements with this for cosmetic reasons. So it might well help with chickenpox and acne scarring — but there is no proper scientific evidence yet. This is less invasive than laser treatment, but is likely to be unsuitable for anyone who tends to scar poorly.'

RATING: 6/10



Heal Advanced Formula Skin Therapy Gel

£32.50/30ml, healshop.com, 020 3006 7364

A HEALING gel that contains liposomes — tiny molecules said to penetrate skin deeply. Other ingredients include collaxyl protein fractions (which the body



uses for cell repair and collagen production), silicone and an amino acid that helps tissue elasticity. Apply two to three times a day to unbroken skin.

VERDICT: 'An interestingly-formulated product, but I have seen no scientific proof of its efficacy as yet. Its potential to help scar healing is likely to relate predominantly to its silicone content. But the use of liposomes to deliver ingredients deeper into the skin may indeed help wound healing.'

RATING: 8/10

Homecraft Scar Management Mini Massager

£19.99, youreableshop.com

THIS is a small, battery-operated massager — regular massage is thought to improve scars.

VERDICT: 'There is very little scientific data to show that massage can help scars to heal better, but all the anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that it does, and most surgeons recommend it.'

'I tell all my patients to massage with aqueous cream for five to ten minutes, two or three times a day. This could be helpful on very small areas of scarring if you applied moisturiser first and allowed it to sink in. But it's easier to gauge pressure if you massage with fingertips.'

RATING: 5/10



Lily-C Silicone Scar Therapy

£40, boots.com

A SELF-ADHESIVE silicone patch designed for Caesarean scars. Wear it for 12 hours a day, for a minimum of 12 weeks.

'This patch can be used over and over again — you just wash it every day with the special silicone cleanser.'

VERDICT: 'Applying silicone over a wound does seem to help a scar heal better. If it stays put — a problem with patches like these — this could also help protect sensitive scars from the irritation caused by underwear and clothing.'

RATING: 7/10



MANDY FRANCIS





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