



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Scars and Keloids

Any time a wound heals, an overgrowth of tissue may result if the outer skin does not adhere properly to the structure beneath it. We refer to this overgrowth as a scar. Scars especially occur in areas where the skin usually moves, or otherwise contracts or tenses. These areas include the hands, legs, chest, shoulders, and upper arms.

In some individuals, there may be a significant overproduction of scar tissue that produces a raised or elevated scar. Unfortunately, this type of raised scar tends to progressively become larger and is referred to as a keloid. Although they usually stop growing eventually, in some cases, a keloid can grow to be several times as large as the original wound. Keloids can occur on top of surgical incisions, vaccination sites, and as a result of acne, burns, or even an ear piercing or minor scratch for some people. Although keloids are not a health risk, they may be tender, itchy, or of psychological concern. Also, keloids tend to occur more frequently in dark-skinned individuals.

If keloids result from acne, it's important to treat the acne to keep new keloids from forming. Acne treatment includes washing with a gentle soap (such as Aveeno or Neutrogena) and using an over-the-counter gel or cream (such as Benzoyl peroxide). Also, don't pop pimples and blackheads, especially if you know you have a tendency to form scars. Keep your hair away from your face and shoulders, and avoid cosmetics and lotions that aggravate acne.

You should contact your health care professional if you'd like to learn more specific ways to treat keloids. He or she may want to inject a corticosteroid medication directly into the keloid to try to decrease the thickness of the scar and to minimize the itching. Other treatment options include using a silicon gel dressing, X-ray therapy, freezing with liquid nitrogen, or pressure bandages. Surgical removal of keloids is not usually effective because it often causes additional scarring. Your health care professional will help you determine the treatment option that is best for you.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to members.kp.org.
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook

- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION

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