



3/ Move less

Avoid activities that pull the skin around the wound tight as this can cause the scar to widen, says Dr Low.

If you still can't stop scratching, dress the area to prevent any accidental injuries, says Dr Low.

Look Great

Scars are like a box of chocolates – you never know what you're going to get. Most times, you can only tell when the wound has healed completely, says Dr Low Chai Ling, a medical adviser at The Sloane Clinic.

To replace damaged tissue, the body produces excess collagen, which gives rise to scars, or healed areas that look different from surrounding skin, explains Dr Calvin Chan, the medical director of Calvin Chan Aesthetic & Laser Clinic.

Besides the severity of your wound (depth and size), your age, sex, and ethnicity could affect how the scar looks, adds Dr Chan. While you have little control over these factors, you can reduce scarring by treating the injured spot early.



WITHOUT A TRACE

DON'T WANT A SCAR? TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS YOU'RE HURT. BY YUEN YI YING

Help it heal

1/ Skip hydrogen peroxide
Although it's found in many first aid kits, this chemical is too harsh and shouldn't be used to sterilise open wounds. It can destroy the new cells that grow immediately after you get cut, says Dr Chan. This slows the healing process and ups your chances of scarring. Instead, use water to flush out debris from the wound, and follow with antiseptic cream.

2/ Don't apply anything with vitamin E
Recent studies show that it can actually impair the healing process and even trigger allergic reactions, says Dr Chan.

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4/ Only use what it
Wounds tend to itch as they dry out, so keep the area moist with a treatment cream or gel like **Dermatix Ultra-Advance Scar Treatment** (\$150, Calvin Chan Aesthetic & Laser Clinic). It contains silicone and vitamin C to prevent the formation of scar tissue. A cheaper alternative: Mix a hypoallergenic lotion, like **Phylogel AI Cream** (\$50, Calvin Chan Aesthetic &

Laser Clinic), with a mild steroid cream (with 0.5 to one per cent hydrocortisone) to soothe your skin, and **cover it**. If you still can't stop scratching, dress the area to prevent any accidental injuries, says Dr Low.

5/ Cover up
Leaving gashes open can lead to infection or cause cuts to dry out and form scabs too quickly. "This leaves the area vulnerable to cracking and re-opening," says Dr Chan. Spread antiseptic cream over the wound, then cover it with a topical treatment – like a silicone gel sheet – for about a week. It prevents scarring from rising above the skin, keeping scars flat.

6/ Rub it...later
Once the cut closes, massage the newly-formed skin with lotion a few times a day, using circular motions. This helps to break down the dense bonds of collagen that cause scarring, says Dr Low.

7/ Stay out of the sun
Minimise UV exposure as healing skin is extra sensitive. Otherwise, it may darken and make the mark more prominent, says Dr Low.

BANISH THE BOO-BOOS

Find the right treatment for your mark.

IF IT'S RAISED

It could be a hypertrophic scar or keloid, usually the result of burns, insect bites or repeated trauma.

IF IT'S SUNKEN

Commonly caused by chicken pox, surgery, and acne, atrophic scars appear as pits or indentations.

FIX IT! Dermal fillers, chemical peels or laser treatment (which injures skin in a controlled manner to stimulate healing) can even out skin surface.

IF IT RESEMBLES A TEAR

Pale or purplish-red stretch marks may appear after pregnancy, growth spurts, and weight gain.

IF IT'S A DARK SPOT

Post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (darkening) occurs when skin produces too much melanin in response to an

injury, says Dr Low. Contrary to popular belief, this isn't a form of scarring. It fades over time, and could take between three months and two years.

FIX IT! Try over-the-counter whitening products containing ingredients such as vitamin C and A, as well as glycolic acid. They help exfoliate and brighten spots.



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