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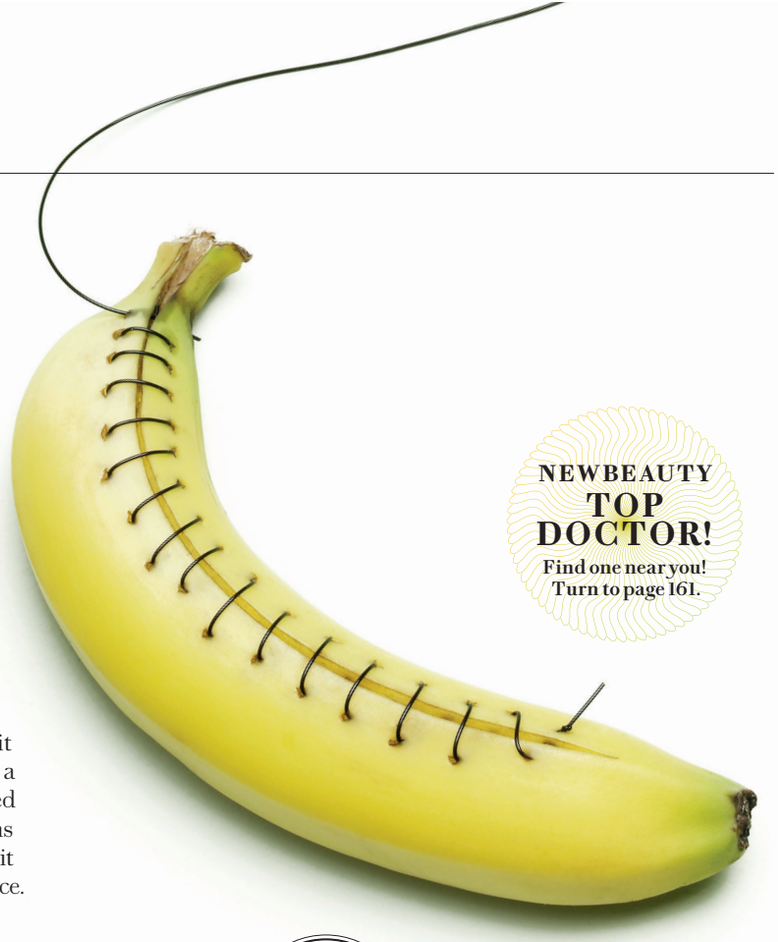
EXPERT ADVICE

HOW DO I GET RID OF MY SCARS?

written by **Danielle Fontana**



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Scars are a fact of life. No matter how careful you are, some, like the scars left behind from surgery, are unavoidable. Even the most skilled surgeon will tell you that a small, well-placed scar is a fair trade-off—it is the body's natural way of healing a wound, after all—but it can still be a tough pill to swallow. Because gaining a scar is the downside to planned procedures and accidental injuries alike, we asked three plastic surgeons to weigh in on the best ways to fade scars you've had for years, how to limit new ones from forming and how reduce their appearance once they surface.

Alan Durkin, MD
Vero Beach, FL, Plastic Surgeon

THE LASER LOWDOWN

"If you are unhappy with the way a past scar has healed, there are options available to improve the way it looks, but the course of action depends on each scar's individual appearance. For hypertrophic (raised) scars, I recommend a series of erbium-YAG fractional laser resurfacing treatments. For more prominent, robust scars, excising the old scar, which involves cutting out the scar tissue and then restitching the incision, followed by a combination of silicone therapy (either a gel formula or a sheet, which wears like a Band-Aid over the scar) and a fractional laser, usually delivers the best results. If your scar is fairly new, try massaging the area daily (scar massage is a method of manually softening and flattening scars by breaking up the tissue) to help to improve its texture."

THE TAKEAWAY

A variety of options can diminish the look of scars, but because the type of scar, as well as your history of scarring, results in different solutions, it's best to consult with your doctor first.

Andrew Jacono, MD
New York Facial Plastic Surgeon

THE SUPPLEMENT SECRET

"I often see patients with preexisting scars who are looking to remove or reduce them. Depending on the location, severity and type of scar, a laser treatment like fractional CO_2 and/or Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) can flatten and fade unsightly scars. A diet rich in glucosamine, vitamin C and hyaluronic acid will minimize bruising, swelling and excess bleeding, making the healing process easier while also limiting scarring. If you undergo a procedure that results in a scar, your doctor should apply flexible collodion (an alcohol-based, syrup-like liquid) to the incision area afterward to create a transparent, flexible film that will hold the wound closed and minimize any scarring in the long run. Six to eight weeks later, I also recommend an IPL laser treatment to calm any persisting redness."

THE TAKEAWAY

Working with your doctor to alter your nutritional regimen and add in additional supplements can reduce scarring, bruising and inflammation.

George Sanders, MD
Encino, CA, Plastic Surgeon

THE SILICONE SOLUTION

"Silicone treatments work well to lessen the appearance of scars, and the size, type and maturity of the particular scar in question will usually dictate the best option for you. If a scar is new, I recommend using Biocorneum—an FDA-cleared silicone gel designed to minimize scarring by hydrating and protecting the area as it matures—twice daily for six weeks. And, if patients have a history of problematic scars that are prone to thickening, I like them to use embrace Active Scar Defense, a dressing that relieves tension on the scar to limit excess scar tissue formation and allow the wound to heal better. However, if a preexisting scar has thickened, a steroid injection and/or fractional laser treatment can improve its appearance."

THE TAKEAWAY

Topical scar-reduction products decrease the size and thickness of various scars by increasing hydration and promoting collagen production. But, they must be used daily in order to be effective.

Mederma Quick Dry Oil, $20, mederma.com

ScarAway Silicone Scar Sheets, $21, myscaraway.com

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