

New UCLA Scar Treatment Program offers personalized, outpatient care



The UCLA Scar Treatment Program offers treatment for symptomatic or asymptomatic scars from any cause, as well as care for burn injuries. As part of the Division of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, this outpatient program offers personalized care using the latest technologies, including surgery, steroid treatment and laser therapy.

Continuous care through the scar-healing process

Most people recovering from a surgery, traumatic injury or acute burn are left with some scarring and/or disfigurement. Whether the scar is small or large, the UCLA Scar Treatment Program has the expertise and advanced tools to achieve good functional and aesthetic outcomes in the outpatient setting.

Patients are initially seen by a physician who evaluates the scar and discusses the functional and aesthetic goals of treatment.

If the scar is asymptomatic but the patient wants to make it less noticeable, the UCLA team will develop a personalized plan to improve its appearance. If, rather, the scar is causing the patient's skin to pull, or it is itching and causing general discomfort, the team will develop a separate plan to address these needs.

Convenient scar and burn care at UCLA

The UCLA Scar Treatment Program offers individualized care from initial assessment through recovery for scars and acute burn injuries. "Our Scar Treatment Program is new to UCLA Health, and a great option for patients who want to receive their care in a top-notch, Los Angeles-based academic medical center rather than being sent to an out-of-network hospital or a location that's far away," says Andrew Vardanian, MD, assistant clinical professor in UCLA's Division of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery.

The first meeting with new patients is used to establish what aesthetic or functional improvements they'd like to see with treatment. From there, the physician develops a personalized treatment plan and oversees the healing process. "We're very hands-on here, and provide personalized and individualized care based on the needs of each patient," Dr. Vardanian says. "This commitment to our patients should give them great comfort and peace of mind."

Some scars cause physical deformity and discomfort. This includes scars that have overgrown their original border, called keloids, and scars that have expanded above the surrounding skin, called hypertrophic scars. The UCLA clinic has the expertise to treat these complicated scars in the outpatient setting.

A variety of treatment options in one clinic

The program treats most scars using a combination of topical steroids or steroid injection, outpatient surgery and various types of laser technology, including use of a highly specialized CO₂ laser.

Outside of these modalities, specific treatments include a surgical technique to reposition or camouflage scars, called Z-Plasty; tissue expansion to stretch normal skin before surgical scar removal; the application of silicone gel sheets to help flatten active scars; dermabrasion to smooth out surface irregularities; and collagen injections and fat grafting to fill in uneven areas in depressed scars.

Helping patients with burn injuries recover

In addition to treating scars, the program can also oversee the treatment of small, acute burns that cover less than 10 percent of the patient's body.

Patients with acute burn injury should first see an emergency-room or urgent-care physician who can evaluate the burn and provide initial treatment. With a referral, the program can see patients within 24 to 48 hours of their injury to design a personalized burn-treatment plan and oversee the recovery process.

If the burn isn't too serious, the team will remove dead tissue and then continue to dress and monitor the wound until it has completely healed. If the burn is more severe, the team can perform skin grafting to cover the burn area with healthy skin from another area of the body.

Once the burn is healed, physicians can continue treatment using typical scar therapies, including laser technology and steroid application, to improve the feel and appearance of the scar.

Participating Physician

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