

# Burns & Scar Management

## Outpatient Service

*Occupational Therapy Department, Nelson Hospital*



Allied Health



Nelson Marlborough  
District Health Board

## Burns/Scar Management outpatient service

The Burns/Scar Management outpatient service is based at the Occupational Therapy department of Nelson Hospital and is available to all ages throughout the NMDHB.

The service is provided by an Occupational Therapist who has specialised in the assessment and treatment of burns, injuries, surgery and diseases that have the potential to cause scarring. Scar Management assessment and treatment can be funded by ACC if caused by an accident. The NMDHB funds non accidents for those with public health services eligibility. Referrals are accepted from Health Professionals throughout the NMDHB catchment.

**Please see the back page of this pamphlet for how to make a referral to the B/SM service.**

Scarring is a normal healing process, however sometimes the scar can become red, raised and thickened (hypertrophic).

Hypertrophic scars usually develop 6 to 8 weeks after skin closure has been achieved.

## Indications for scar management

Wounds caused by burns or skin grafting, trauma, surgery or disease that take more than 2-3 weeks to heal, can become hypertrophic and would then benefit from scar management intervention.

The scar may also be itchy, tender or painful, and if over a joint may prevent full movement if the scarring contracts and tightens (develops a contracture).

Factors that may influence occurrence of hypertrophic scars include:

- wounds that have experienced infection or prolonged healing
  - the age of the patient, as well as their general wellbeing (co-morbidities)
  - the depth, size and location of the wound
  - the ethnicity of the patient, and/or a family history of raised scarring,
- (there is a greater incidence of keloid scars in darker skinned people or if there is a family history).

## Scar management assessment & treatment goals

The Burns & Scar Management Therapist will assess the client's scars or the potential for scarring that could occur from the injury/condition.

A therapeutic treatment strategy will be evaluated and discussed with the client. Client consent for scar management intervention will be undertaken with the aims of:

- minimising scarring
- preventing contracture development
- achieving optimal functional and cosmetic outcomes acceptable to the client
- maximising functional independence

Treatment for hypertrophic scarring is usually required for 12-18 months (Munroe 1995) or until the scars have matured i.e. the scars have become pale, soft, smooth and flat.

## The Role of the Burns/Scar Management Therapist

- promotes early scar management intervention
- prescribes custom made and ready-to-wear compression garments
- utilises contact medias such as silicone sheeting
- advises the client re scar management
- educates the client, family/carers
- facilitates psychological support
- collaborates with and refers to District Nurses regarding wound care: hand therapist for positioning and splinting to maintain optimal joint range of movement and prevention of contractures
- consults with the Visiting Plastic Surgeon and multi disciplinary team at our Regional Reconstructive & Plastic Surgery Unit at Hutt Hospital

## How to make a referral to the service

Please use the Allied Health referral form or send letter of referral to:

Fax (03) 546 1597 - Internal extension 7597.

Please include the patients details, the date of injury, ACC claim number (if applicable) and your contact information.

For information phone: 546 1660 Internal extension 7660.

## Concerns

If you have a concern regarding the Burns/Scar Management service delivery please contact (03) 5461660 or write to:

The Team Leader, Occupational Therapy Department, Nelson Hospital, NMDHB, Private Bag 18, Nelson.

To make a formal complaint please contact the Complaints Coordinator of the Nelson Marlborough DHB.

In order to ensure a high quality/standard of service, your feedback is welcomed.

**Suggested reading: Evidence-Based Best Practice Guideline  
“Management of Burns and Scalds in Primary Care” June 2007,  
New Zealand Guidelines Group (ACC)**

Developed December 2010 by the Burns & Scar Management Service,  
Occupational Therapy Department, Nelson Hospital.