

△ **GENERAL INFORMATION**

When an incision is made on the skin and then stitched together, the body starts the process of healing very quickly. Certain chemicals and tissues are involved in this healing. One of these tissues, *collagen*, forms scar. The body, however, keeps the collagen formation in check and gradually takes some of it away. That's one reason an incision heals and then becomes less obvious with time.

In some people, however, the body does not keep check on the collagen, so it continues to grow and grow and forms a much bigger scar than is normal. This is called a *keloid*.

Keloids occur more commonly in people with darker skin and in certain areas of the body, especially the front of the chest and the shoulders in young women.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- There is a thick, shiny, raised scar that is wider and darker than expected.
- The scar often itches severely. It can also be quite painful.

DIAGNOSIS

- Usually, the diagnosis can be made by taking a detailed history and doing a thorough physical examination.

○ **TREATMENT**

- There may not be any treatment; the keloids can simply be tolerated and observed. Most keloids get somewhat better with time.
- There is no foolproof therapy to prevent the keloid from forming or to take care of it once it has formed.
- Pressure garments are often used to lessen the size of a keloid or to slow down its growth. For example, a keloid on an earlobe may be improved with a specially made clip-on earring.
- Some skin lubricants may help with the itching, or to soften the scar.
- A bandage made of silicone is sometimes placed on the keloid to soften it and to reduce the degree of redness.
- Injecting the keloid with cortisone-like medicine can help reduce the itching. It doesn't do much to make the keloid smaller.
- Simply cutting out the scar and resuturing the incision does not work. Another keloid forms just like it did before; sometimes this keloid is even worse than before.
- Excising the keloid and resuturing the incision while

at the same time giving some radiation treatment to the incision to slow down the healing (scarring) process has been known to help. Unfortunately, the long-term effects can be harmful, so few surgeons use this method.

- From the standpoint of appearance and itching, one of the more successful methods is a multiple-part operation.

After very careful consideration of all factors, including possible complications, the recommendation is to proceed with an operation.

PREOPERATIVE PREPARATION

- Do not eat or drink anything for 8 hours before the operation.
- Shower (and shave) as usual on the morning of the operation.
- You may be given medicine that will make you feel drowsy before you are brought to the operating room.

□ **OPERATION**

- The operation will be done under local anesthesia; the affected area will be made numb. Also, you will be given medicine that will make you feel very drowsy.
- During the operation you may feel some tugging but no pain.
- The operation will consist of the following:
 - The keloid will be carefully excised with very gentle handling of the tissue.
 - Cortisone will be injected into the surrounding tissue. This will tend to hold back the healing tissue from coming in too fast and too abundantly (which is what leads to the tendency to form keloid).
 - The incision will be closed in a cosmetic fashion.
 - Extra precautions will be taken that the wound does not become infected.
- You should be able to go home directly after the operation.
- You will be given specific instructions on how to help take care of the incision.
- The doctor will discuss with you how to go about taking your usual shower or bath.
- Arrangements will be made for your medicine, follow-up office visit, and stitch removal.

☞ **CALL OUR OFFICE IF**

- The incision becomes red or swollen, or there is drainage from it.
- You develop a temperature higher than 100°F.
- You have any questions.