

# 6 new ways to remedy SCARS

How to help lessen the appearance of marks left from cuts, surgery or acne By Kate Cannon

They say every scar tells a story, but who says you have to share that story with the world? Most scars (triggered when the body's repair system produces too much of the skin tissue collagen at the wound site) will improve on their own over time, becoming lighter and more pliable. But some scars remain lifelong reminders of surgery, a bagel-slicing slip-up or, worse yet, a painful life event. "No one knows why some healing goes bad," says Tina S. Alster, M.D., a scar expert and director of the Washington Institute of

**Dermatologic Laser Surgery.** The good news, however, is that there are an increasing number of options for diminishing the look of a scar. Here's what you need to know.

## 1. You don't have to live with pockmarks anymore.

Fat or collagen injections can raise these scars instantly, but the effects last only about four months (average cost: \$250 per injection). For deeper indentations, the Nd:Yag laser seems to help by stimulating the formation of collagen beneath the skin, which can smooth out scars.

## 2. You can flatten raised scars.

Silicone sheeting and scar-reducing polyurethane dressings have been shown in studies to help prevent raised scars from forming and to flatten them once they've set in (cost: \$17-\$105). While these products produce the best results on newer scars, older scars also show improvement.

## 3. A combination of therapies works best on keloids.

There has been success in flattening keloids (knobby growths of scar tissue most common in people of Mediterranean or African descent) by first having the keloid sliced or frozen off, followed by a series of steroid injections – one right after surgery then three follow-up shots over the next three months.

## 4. C-section scars can be minimized.

The incision for a Cesarean section (or appendectomy) goes so deep that as it heals, scar tissue affixes directly to underlying muscle, which pulls the scar down. The fix includes snipping underneath the skin to sever the connective tissue, causing the scar to spring up. Next, fat is injected to fill the gap that results and to prevent the skin from reattaching to the muscle.

## 5. Pigmented scars can be lightened successfully.

Applying a prescription hydroquinone-based bleaching cream once the wound has healed may work, but it can cause redness, itching, stinging and even sun sensitivity if you have skin that's easily irritated.

## 6. You can effectively conceal a scar.

A dry concealer clings better to skin than a creamy one, says Los Angeles-based makeup pro Collier Strong.

# SHAPE

