



## **Keloid Scars A Problem For Post Open Heart Patients**

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Valencia, California: Even with today's technology, hearing that a person needs open heart surgery still brings tension and fear to the patient and their family. The comfort comes from knowing that with today's techniques and tools the surgical outcome usually translates into an extended and improved quality of life. Post op care has also improved but once seeing the surgery behind them, patients at times don't properly take care of their incision thus resulting in an unsightly keloid scar down the chest.

"The scar left from an open heart surgery is very obvious and a big tell. In other words, when we see this particular scar we know you had open heart surgery and are now part of what we call the zipper club," states Raul Meza, a nurse who has cared for open heart patients for over 20 years. Meza then goes on to state, "When I'm out in public and I see someone with this scar I mentally give them a thumbs up because I know that they went through something scary and challenging and they came out victorious. What I hate however, is seeing someone at the pool or on the beach and their scar is hideous. In fact it has turned into this large keloid, raised, angry looking scar down the chest. I get upset because that didn't have to happen. If they had followed their discharge orders and used a silicone scar gel with their doctor's approval, then they probably wouldn't be embarrassed by the way they look today without their shirt or in their swimsuit."

Scars on the chest are often left from the incision that was made where the surgeon cut to access the heart.

The surgeon also often inserts chest tubes below that incision to assist in the draining of blood and fluid that occurs after surgery. When the surgeon removes these large tubes whose diameters are about the size of a quarter, it also leaves an imprint which when healed leaves a scar. Unfortunately this chest tube entry points are also commonly Keloid, or leave a raised scar.

The formation of Keloids is one of the most challenging clinical problems in wound healing. Though not dangerous, keloid scars do cause emotional stress as they affect the patient self esteem. There are numerous treatment methods for keloid scars. These include surgical excision (which means more surgery), intralesional steroid injection, radiation therapy, laser therapy, or the use of a silicone scar gel.

There is stretching tension in the chest as it heals and stretching tension is often associated with keloid generation, states Meza. The best and most affordable way to treat a keloid scar is by avoiding it. Using a premium scar gel during the healing process may be your best bet. That is something you would need to check with your surgeon about before using but I would take it seriously because good wound care can save you further hospitalizations, money and embarrassment.

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