



A Guide to Speed-up Recovery & Decrease Pain Post Surgery

Michelle Licha-Oros
Medical Massage Therapy
Manual Lymph Drainage



7 Simple Ways to...

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Though not all scars develop troublesome issues, some do. Use the 7 tips in this guide as a resource to boost your post surgical recovery.

Scar related issues arise early in the wound healing process. Watch out for any signs of infections and prolonged swelling. These two issues can compromise your healing process and contribute to abnormal scar tissue formation.

The development of abnormal scar tissue puts too much tension in the healing tissues. Not only does this create stiffness and range of motion issues, the tension can compress nerves and restrict blood and lymph flow. **This tension is usually the source of pain and pain changes the way you move.**

Many of you may be encouraged and directed to massage the scar post surgically. Massage can minimize scarring and relieve pain in the surgical area. But, have you been coached on how? Maybe you've heard of lymphatic massage? Do you know what it has to do with swelling or scar tissue formation?

Treat your surgical scar with great care. This guide offers you 7 simple tips to keep your wound healing process going in the right direction. Here's how!



1. Slow, calm, deep breathing

How you breathe can make all the difference when you're in pain.

People in pain tend to develop shallow breathing habits. **Shallow breathing restricts the use of the diaphragm and shifts the work to the neck, shoulder and lower back muscles.**

Shallow breathing puts more physical stress on your body and adds to your feeling of stress and anxiety. All this extra tension on your body does not support your recovery.

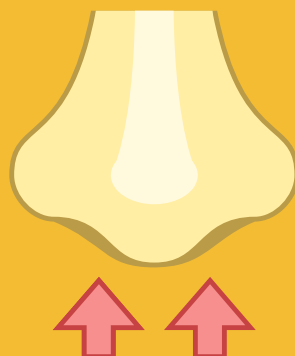
Pay attention to how you breathe. **SLOW, CALM, DEEP** breathing can help reduce your pain and anxiety.

Practice like this:

Find a comfortable position. **Breathe in through your nose** for 4-7 seconds. Imagine trying to fill up an imaginary balloon in your belly. This helps the diaphragm pump lymph fluid to get rid of toxins in your body.

Then exhale gently **ALL THE WAY** - try to get all of your air out. If the exhale feels awkward try humming for a few seconds. Repeat for 3-5 minutes multiple times a day to help relax your muscles and lower your stress.

The more you practice SLOW, CALM, DEEP breathing through your nose the easier it gets.





2. Start when the wound is closed

Step back and take into account any fear, anxiety, trauma or body image issues you may have with your scar. Take a slow, calm, deep breath. If you're comfortable, simply put your hands over the area of the scar. This alone can be extremely emotionally therapeutic.

The first few weeks after surgery, your tissues, nerves, lymph and blood capillaries are regenerating. **Be gentle with newly forming scar tissue.** Before you start rubbing on your scar, first get a sense of what the area around the incision feels like. A “no pain, no gain” mind-set can increase inflammation and set you back in the healing process.

Practice like this:

Try resting your hands next to the wound before you start moving the scar. Feel the quality of the skin all around the area of the incision. Does the skin feel sensitive, painful or numb? Is the skin stiff or swollen? Is it raised or smooth? Does the nearby tissue pucker or dimple? Can you feel tightness extending out from the scar? Are you worried about how it looks now or how it will appear 6 months or 6 years from now?



If you don't feel comfortable or confident touching the area, please consider contacting me for help. Many of the people I work with appreciate being guided in this process.

Skilled touch can be comforting, help alleviate anxiety and ease pain in old and new wounds.



3. How to massage your scar

Massage can greatly improve circulation in the tissues, relax the stiffness and pain around the incision, and help with the final appearance of the scar.

Always follow doctor's orders. Your doctor knows the time frame your surgical/injured area needs to heal before any scar tissue work can begin.

Make sure the wound is closed. The first few weeks after surgery, the tissues, lymph, blood and nerve vessels are in the process of repair. Massaging hard can inflame and delay the healing process. Bacteria can be introduced and cause infection. Light massage, if done correctly, can help minimize inflammation and make the scar more flush with surrounding tissue.

In the beginning, just focus on the skin. I'm not there to guide your hands so please resist the urge to press hard. The mending nerve endings will appreciate this and reward you with less pain.

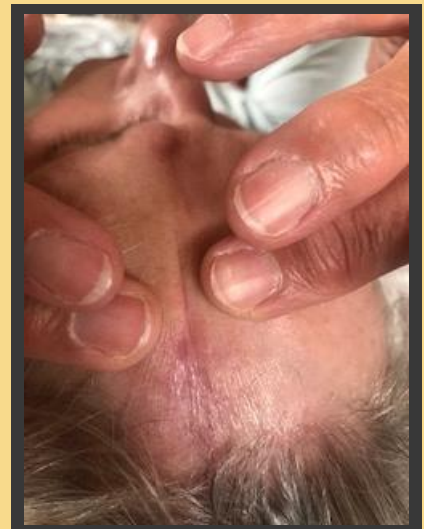
Practice like this:

Start an inch or two away from the scar.

Use a broad soft hand or finger pads to apply light pressure to the skin.

Keep your hands and fingers flat and soft. Avoid pressing down. Instead, try to move the skin horizontally, always toward the scar. Don't spread the scar.

You want the tissues to knit back together and not pull apart.





4. Swelling? Lymphatic Drainage!

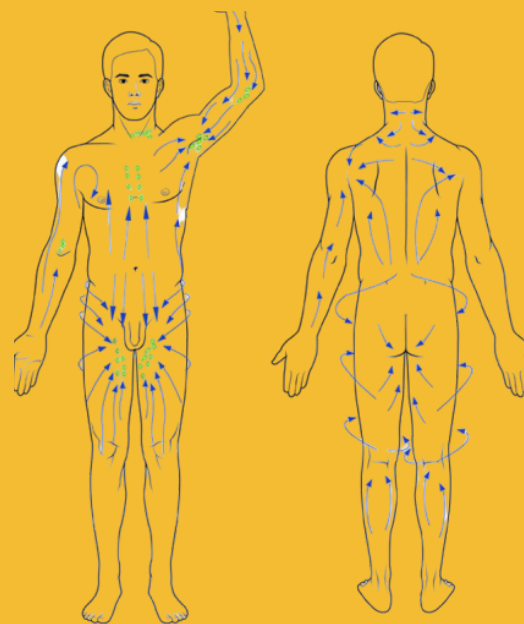
Swelling is normal after surgery but persistent swelling is not.

When tissues are damaged from surgery, the lymphatic system works overtime to clear the area of cellular waste and defend the body from infection. This inflammation is a normal part of healing. It's the body's natural response to an injury. Lymphatic vessels are located in the layer right below the skin and above the muscle bed. These vessels drain areas of swelling and they act like sewer pipes under the skin.

When there's prolonged or excessive swelling, the fluid pulls on the tissues and the tension and irritation drives more scar tissue formation = more swelling, more scar tissue, more pain. Persistent swelling can extend the healing process beyond normal length of time. It leads to an unfavorable environment for healthy scar formation and increases the risk of infection.

One way you can alleviate swelling, tightness and pain is through manual lymphatic drainage or lymphatic massage.

Reducing chronic swelling helps minimize adhesions and tissue stiffness. All this adds up to you recovering faster, moving better and with less pain!



While scar tissue therapy should wait until the wound is closed, **lymph drainage can usually start 48 hours after surgery.** The technique feels like a gentle skin stretch that leaves your skin feeling lighter, less puffy and less painful. Lymphatic vessels are superficial so they don't need to be pressed hard. Pushing hard closes the vessels. An experienced Manual Lymphatic Drainage therapist can help you with your swelling and speed up your recovery.



Results

Do these pictures inspire you?

"Michelle began treating me about 8 weeks after my 5th major abdominal surgery, which I underwent for lysis of multiple adhesions (from prior surgeries) and removal of sections of both large and small intestines... She worked closely with me during every session, seeking my input about areas of concern and feedback about her treatment."

Mary Beth G.



BEFORE & AFTER

Three 60 minute sessions one week apart

Client instructed on follow up care



BEFORE & AFTER

Two 60 minute sessions one week apart

Client instructed on follow up care

"She was able to relieve me from months of nerve pain following a cancer surgery in only two sessions. Additionally, she took the time to instruct me in doing follow-up therapy should it be necessary. Michelle's compassionate and talented massage reduced both the appearance and swelling of my scar tissue."

I feel extremely fortunate to have found her!"

Nancy C.



5. Clothing: watch the rub

Too much tension and friction on the skin, can stimulate scar tissue and adhesion formation. Too much tension will warp the texture of the skin and alter the healing conditions of a scar.

Notice if you're getting excessive friction on the incision due to **tight fitting clothing**. Also pay attention to the way your clothing **pulls on the skin near the scar**.

Watch if your underwear, belt line or pant crease irritate your scar. Bras can fit too snug around the waist and the straps can dig against the skin compressing or tugging the incision. Uncomfortable fitting shoes and hats can also cause trouble by rubbing on nearby skin and create a drag on the incision.

Always seek medical attention if you accidentally cause the incision line to open or stitches to fail. An open area of skin can expose the wound to bacteria, infection and delay the healing process.



6. Scar care: moisturize & protect

The scar and surrounding skin will feel more supple if you keep it moisturized once the incision is closed, the stitches are out or dissolved, and there is no draining or oozing.

Consult your doctor for an ointment suitable to your unique wound healing process. A good quality skin healing balm, shea butter, rosehip oil, coconut oil, or lavender essential oil are some of my client's favorite. Use sunscreen to protect your scar once it's closed from sun exposure. Covering or applying SPF will help protect the skin and make the scar less visible.

Don't use the product if you develop any allergic reaction, skin irritation, redness or swelling.



7. Get professional help

Timing is everything.

A month or two after surgery is the ideal time to get professional help.

The fastest way to speed up recovery and decrease pain post surgery is by seeing a skilled hands-on therapist in scar massage therapy and manual lymphatic drainage. A therapist with these skills can listen to your story, assess your tissue and find out what could be causing problems with your healing process.

You want a therapist who understands wound healing timelines and appropriate hands on techniques for every stage of the healing process. Receiving this kind of help will help you reach a better outcome of your surgical recovery, decrease pain and improve the appearance of your scar.

Remember that **the tension in the tissue is the biggest driver of problematic scar tissue formation and pain.** Decrease the tension on the nerves, blood and lymph vessels and you will feel a less pain!!

Pain changes the way you move and it has the potential to create compensation problems in other areas of your body. The help you get early on will be of great benefit to your long term progress. Don't just "suffer through it"! Find help!

Use the tips from this guide and visit a hands-on therapist and you will see improved changes in your scar healing process.



Conclusion

As a therapist trained in scar tissue and manual lymphatic drainage therapy, this work never ceases to amaze me. Each recovery process, each scar, has a unique personal story. I'm thrilled to serve clients who put their trust in my hands to help them get out of pain and move better post surgery

I encourage you to keep in mind these 7 tips for a speedy recovery. I believe they can have a positive impact on reducing your pain and improving the outcomes of your surgery.

Since 2007, I've devoted my practice to helping people receive specialized scar tissue therapy. I've worked with a wide range of tissue traumas: joint replacements, tendon and bone repairs; lipoma and cyst removals; hysterectomies and C-sections; tummy tucks, liposuction and breast reductions; knife and gun shot wounds, dog and cat bites; rib and head injuries; breast cancer and liver tumor procedures; chest tubes and drain scars; skin graft and biopsy sites; and so many other examples of injuries and surgeries.

Prevention is key!

I hope you found this information helpful. May it help you get on the right healing track!

If you're currently struggling with pain, range of motion and swelling after surgery, I'd be happy to offer some help. Reach out to me so we can discuss your symptoms and treatment options.

970.509.0348
michilicha@yahoo.com

www.michellelitcha.com



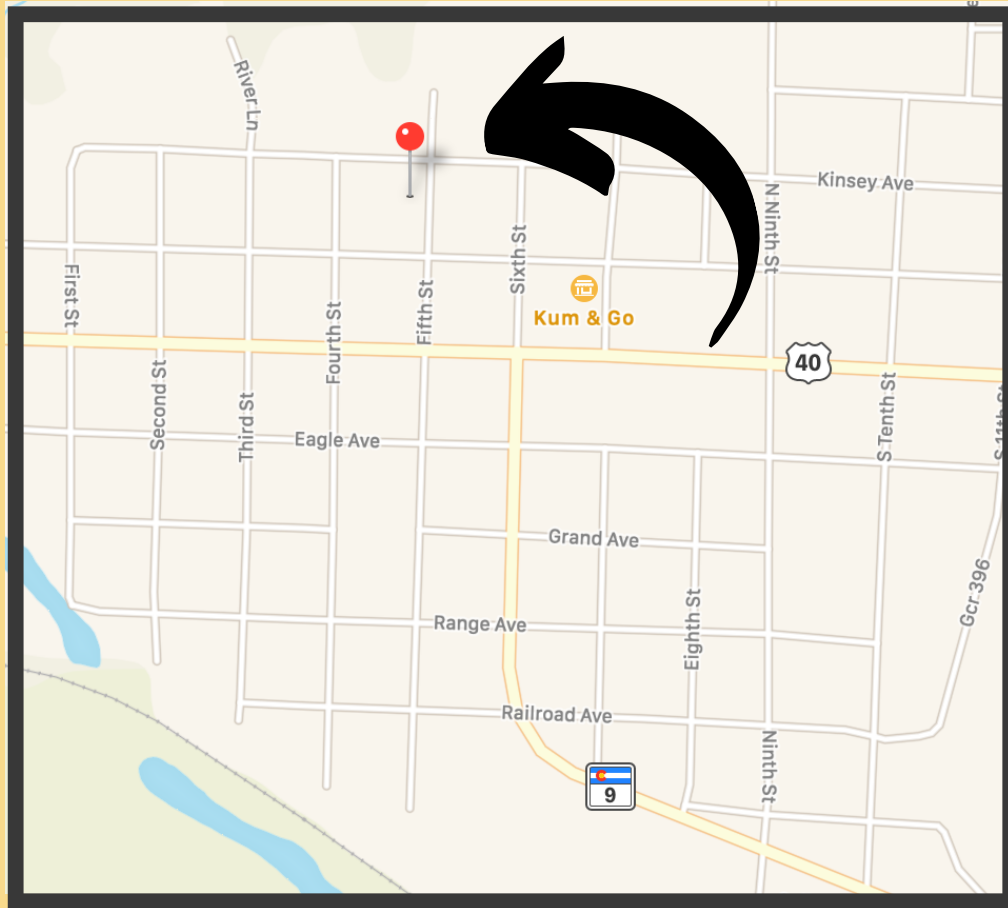
Health Advice Disclaimer

Every person's surgical recovery is unique. My intention is to provide you with a few tips that will help you through your healing process. As with any healing process, each person's health history, circumstances and symptoms can vary widely. My hope is that this resource is of service to your recovery. Always consult with your doctor or surgeon to ensure the advice I offer is useful and applies to you.

It's particularly important to seek a trained therapist in scar tissue management when working with hernia mesh and abdominal adhesions. If you've had lymph nodes removed and/or radiation therapy as part of cancer treatment, a therapist trained in Manual Lymphatic Drainage or Complete Decongestive Therapy can help you with any signs or symptoms of lymphedema.

970.509.0348
michilicha@yahoo.com

www.michellelicha.com



Michelle Licha Oros

Medical Massage Therapy
Manual Lymphatic Drainage

970-509-0348

420 Kinsey Ave.

Kremmling, CO 80459

www.michellelicha.com