

Understanding and treating acne scarring.

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Introduction

Acne is a common skin condition that affects millions of people worldwide. While managing active breakouts is a challenge in itself, for many, the battle doesn't end there. Acne can leave behind a lasting reminder in the form of scars. Acne scarring can be emotionally distressing and impact self-esteem, but the good news is that there are various treatments available to minimize and even eliminate these scars. In this article, we will explore the different types of acne scars, their causes, and the treatments and preventive measures that can help restore smoother, blemish-free skin. These are depressions or pits in the skin caused by a loss of tissue. Atrophic scars are further divided into three subtypes. (a) Icepick Scars: These are deep, narrow, and sharply defined scars that resemble small, V-shaped punctures on the skin. They are the most challenging type of atrophic scars to treat. (b) Boxcar Scars: Boxcar scars have a broader, rectangular shape with defined edges. They are shallower than icepick scars but still result in noticeable depressions. (c) Rolling Scars: Rolling scars create wave-like undulations on the skin's surface. They are typically wider and less defined than icepick or boxcar scars [1].

Unlike atrophic scars, these scars are raised and result from an overproduction of collagen during the healing process. Hypertrophic scars are raised but remain within the boundaries of the original acne lesion, while keloid scars can extend beyond the affected area. Understanding the causes of acne scarring is crucial in preventing and treating it effectively. Several factors contribute to the development of acne scars. When acne lesions become inflamed, the body's natural response is to repair the damaged tissue. However, excessive inflammation can lead to the formation of scars. Failing to treat acne promptly can increase the likelihood of scarring. Early intervention can help prevent severe breakouts and minimize the risk of scarring [2].

Attempting to pop or pick at acne blemishes can rupture the follicle wall, causing the infection to spread deeper into the skin and increasing the risk of scarring. Some individuals are more genetically predisposed to scar formation than others. If you have a family history of acne scarring, you may be at a higher risk. The more severe and prolonged the acne, the greater the likelihood of scarring. Cystic acne, in particular, tends to lead to more noticeable scarring. The good news is that there are several effective treatments available for acne scarring. The choice of treatment depends on the type and severity of the scars, as well as individual skin characteristics.

Here are some common treatment options. For mild scarring, topical treatments containing ingredients like retinoids, vitamin C, and hyaluronic acid can help improve skin texture and reduce the appearance of scars. These treatments work by promoting collagen production and skin cell turnover [3].

Chemical peels involve the application of a chemical solution to the skin, which removes the top layer and encourages the growth of new, smoother skin. Superficial peels can be effective for mild scarring, while deeper peels are suitable for more severe cases. This non-invasive procedure uses a machine to exfoliate the top layer of skin, helping to improve the appearance of shallow acne scars. Multiple sessions may be required for noticeable results. Injectable fillers, such as hyaluronic acid or collagen, can temporarily plump up depressed scars, making them less noticeable. While this is not a permanent solution, it can provide immediate improvement. Laser treatments, including fractional laser and CO2 laser, are highly effective for treating various types of acne scars. These lasers stimulate collagen production and resurface the skin, resulting in smoother texture and reduced scarring [4].

Microneedling involves the use of a device with fine needles to create controlled micro-injuries in the skin. This process stimulates collagen production and can significantly improve the appearance of acne scars over time. In cases of severe scarring, surgical interventions like subcision (releasing scar tissue beneath the skin) or punch excision (removing individual scars) may be necessary. Seek prompt treatment for acne to minimize the risk of scarring. A dermatologist can provide guidance on effective treatments [5].

Conclusion

Acne scarring can have a significant impact on self-esteem and overall well-being. Fortunately, various treatment options are available to help improve the appearance of acne scars. The key to successful treatment is early intervention and selecting the most appropriate treatment method for your specific scarring type. Additionally, practicing good skincare habits and preventive measures can reduce the risk of future scarring. If you're concerned about acne scarring, consult with a dermatologist who can assess your skin and recommend the best course of action for achieving smoother, blemish-free skin.

References

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Received: 23-Aug-2023, Manuscript No. AARCD-23-112897; Editor assigned: 24-Aug-2023, PreQC No. AARCD-23-112897 (PQ); Reviewed: 08-Sep-2023, QC No. AARCD-23-112897; Revised: 14-Sep-2023, Manuscript No. AARCD-23-112897 (R); Published: 25-Sep-2023, DOI:10.35841/aarcd-6.5.167

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