

Pressure Garments

Overview

Applying pressure to a maturing scar aides in a more uniform collagen fibre alignment, producing a flatter, softer and more pliable scar. It can also assist with reducing swelling and itch associated with burn injury.

Generally, VABS therapists prescribe pressure garments for wounds that have taken greater than 14 days to heal (conservatively), or have required a graft.

Wearing regimes

- Clients may gradually increase their garment wear from a couple of hours as their tolerance improves.
- For best outcomes, garment can be worn for up to 23 hours per day, 7 days a week, removing only for showering.
- Garments wearing should continue until scars have reached the point of full maturation (between 6 months and 2 years).
- Garments require a review at VABS every 3-4 months as they tend to become less effective by this timeframe.
- Clients need to monitor their skin carefully – if the skin appears irritated, is breaking down, or the person is unable to tolerate an increased wearing time, the garment should be removed and reviewed at VABS.

Appropriate fit of garments

- Garments should fit like a second skin, be evenly distributed across the covered area, and have minimal to no creases.
- Tight garments cause discomfort, impact circulation (tingling of extremities) and cause oedema to restricted areas. If this occurs, garments should be removed and VABS contacted to organise a review.
- If the garments are too loose, it will not provide any therapeutic input to the scar.

When the garment is removed, the skin will initially be lighter and flatter, however in minutes or hours, the scar will slowly deepen in colour, and potentially become more hard and raised. This indicates the scar is still active.

Care of pressure garments

- Clients are provided with two garments so that one can be worn, whilst the other is washed.
- Pressure garments should be hand washed in warm water with a mild detergent, and then rinsed in cold water. Do **not** use fabric softener.
- Pressure garment should be allowed to drip dry in the shade or indoors. They should **not** be put in the dryer or placed in direct sunlight.

Cautions

- **Small** skin tears can be covered with a non bulky dressing, allowing a person to continue wearing their garment. Ensure close monitoring occurs.
- For wounds that **worsen** or have **additional areas** breakdown the garment may need to be removed. Liaise with VABS for ongoing management.

Weaning of pressure garment

- When scars are mature – garments should be weaned until completely removed.
- Initially, the garment can be removed during the day time so clients can monitor if any changes to their scar has occurred.

Tips

- In hotter months, keep laundered garments in a zip-lock bag in the fridge to assist with a cooling effect on the skin, and to assist with minimising itch.
- Remove excess moisturiser to the skin **prior** to putting garments on.
- Hypafix, duoderm thin and mepiform silicone can be used as a way of providing pressure to smaller areas of scarring, or to edges of grafts. Contact therapists at VABS for further information on using this technique.

Clients should bring pressure garments to ALL outpatient burns appointments at the VABS so the fit can be reviewed at each appointment, to ensure garments are effective.

Contact Details

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Attention: Victorian Adult Burns Service, Allied Health