Dear Alice,

I have several keloid scars on my body. I have tried injections to make them smaller, but they later grew bigger as I put on weight. Is there anything out there that can successfully remove my keloid scars without having to worry that they will come back?
Thank you.

Answer

Dear Reader,

When you get into a scrape, body cells divide and conquer to repair the tissue damage. Normally, cells stop multiplying once the wound is filled in, but in some cases, cells keep dividing, piling up on the skin to form a raised, reddish scar called a keloid. Due to this overgrowth, keloid scars are actually considered benign tumors (the harmless, non-malignant variety). They may be unsightly, itchy, or uncomfortable, but keloids don't cause any health problems.

As you've experienced, these pesky scars are notoriously difficult to remove. After treatment, keloids often crop up again. It's most effective to prevent keloids from developing in the first place. Anyone prone to keloids (especially darker skinned folks who seem more susceptible) may want to avoid piercings or tattoos and take special care of wounds to prevent scarring. For example, applying a pressure dressing, silicone gel pad, or paper tape over an injury for 23 or 24 hours a day may ward off keloid formation. Unfortunately, once a keloid appears, no removal technique is 100 percent effective. The best treatment identified so far is to inject cortisone (a type of steroid) into the keloid once per month for several months. The keloid usually flattens and becomes less noticeable within three to six months. Other treatments that may shrink or improve the appearance of keloids include: cryosurgery (freezing), excision, laser, and x-rays. Non-prescription remedies such as silicone pads and creams applied over a period of months may ease the discomfort of a swollen keloid. However, the effects of these remedies aren't guaranteed.
Before you try another treatment, you may want to consider your standpoint on scars. For example, what bothers you about the keloids? Are you troubled by the scar’s appearance, the memory of the injury, what others may think, or something else? Since it’s likely that the keloids will creep back, is it worth it to you to invest in treatments? If you decide you want to try another remedy, locate a dermatologist who specializes in the treatment of scars.

Scars can be a source of pride or irritation. Either way, they’re a sign that your body is holding itself together!

Alice!
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