
Understanding Tissue Expanding for Burn Scars

Tissue expanding can improve the look of your child's burn scars. It's a reconstructive technique. It slowly stretches a healthy patch of skin. This extra skin is then used to cover or replace scarred skin.

For the treatment, an expander is put under your child's skin. An expander is an implant. It's made out of silicone. It has a small tube and a valve on it. Through the tube, the expander is inflated with saline. Regular filling of the expander over time stretches the skin.

Why tissue expanding is done

Tissue expanding can provide healthy skin that matches the color and texture of a burned area. It's often used for burns on the face and neck. It's also good for those on the scalp because hair will often grow back.

How tissue expanding is done

For this treatment, a surgeon must first put the expander under the skin. This procedure is done in a hospital. During it:

- Your child is given medicine to make them sleepy. Your child won't feel any pain.
- The surgeon makes a small cut in your child's skin next to the burn scars.
- The surgeon puts the expander under the skin.
- The expander is filled with saline.
- The surgeon closes the cut.

Your child may need to take antibiotics after the procedure to prevent infection.

After the incision has healed, your child will see their healthcare provider regularly over several weeks to have the expander filled. This will stretch the skin. Once the skin has been stretched enough, the expander will be taken out. The surgeon will then be able to remove some of the burned skin and replace it with the extra skin to cover the burn scars. The surgeon will take steps to minimize any scars from the surgery.

Tissue expanding can be repeated. But the skin in an area may thin over time, making it harder to do.

Risks of tissue expanding

- Infection
- Expander may move out of place
- Expander may leak or break
- Expander port may break

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- Bad bruise where the expander is placed