

Best swimsuits for your figure • Eat pizza, lose weight • Grab-and-go breakfasts

SHAPE

SHAPE
YOUR
LIFE

**4
WEEKS
TO BIKINI
ABS**
NO CRUNCHES
NECESSARY

SLIM DOWN BY MAY 31

GET THE BODY YOU WANT

in the time you have

- ✓ Busy woman's diet
- ✓ Super-quick fat burner
- ✓ Real-life diet tricks

**5 nutrients
you need now**
(Surprise! NOT calcium)

 **All-natural
allergy cures**



\$3.99 U.S. \$5.99 Canada
May 2008 Shape.com
Display until May 5, 2008

**"I need an
at-home
exercise
routine"**

A FITNESS
DILEMMA—SOLVED
p. 162

BLAST 700 CALORIES

**The cardio plan
anyone can do**

**<GO FROM
FLAB TO FAB**

The workout
that got Denise
Richards strong
& sculpted

PLUS "I have skin cancer WHERE?"
Real women, lifesaving advice, p. 105

no more scars!

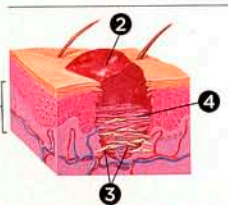
Got a cut? These tips will help you heal faster—and prevent a permanent mark. BY GENEVIEVE MONSMA

Even if you have sensitive skin or a dark complexion (both of which may make you prone to scarring), proper care can keep a wound from becoming an unsightly spot, says Valerie Callender, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

The basic facts

When a cut slices deep enough into the skin's **dermis** (its second layer) to cause bleeding, platelets (the smallest blood cells) rush to the site to form a **clot**. Once the bleeding has stopped, **fibroblast cells**, which produce the firming tissue **collagen**, head to the area to repair and rebuild the skin. Most wounds heal within 10 days

without leaving a scar. But sometimes infection and inflammation set in, disrupting the repair process and causing the fibroblasts to overproduce collagen. The result: a raised, discolored scar.



WOUNDED SKIN

1. dermis
2. clot
3. fibroblast cells
4. collagen

What to look for

Which cuts form scars? These are signs your skin may be at risk.

> **Redness or swelling** Discoloration and tenderness can indicate

infection, the No. 1 reason wounds don't heal properly.

> **Itchiness** The urge to scratch your cut may suggest that fibroblasts are working overtime, which can often lead to the uneven development of new skin.



Keep new scars covered when in the sun to avoid permanent discoloration

> **A surgical incision** A deep wound is more apt to scar because it's difficult for the new skin to close up seamlessly.

> **Location** Cuts on arms or knees often reopen as you move and stretch that skin, making it hard for those wounds to heal.

Simple solutions

> **Clean with soap and water** Wash the cut as soon as you can, then cover with an antibiotic cream like Neosporin (\$7; at drugstores) and a bandage. Leave it alone for at least two days.

> **Keep the wound moist** To maximize the repair process, apply moisturizer twice a day for a week once the bandage is off. Mederma (\$24; dermadocor.com) contains aloe and a patented onion extract to hydrate and fight inflammation.

> **Smooth with silicone** If the area is still puffy after a month, try a treatment with silicone. Dermatix Ultra (\$50; at doctors' offices) will help break down scar tissue and flatten skin.

EXPERT STRATEGY If, despite your at-home efforts, a scar still forms, a dermatologist can help. Cortisone shots instantly smooth bumpy skin. If you've had the scar for months (or years), a fractional laser like the Fraxel will help even out your skin's texture and tone. You'll need about four treatments, starting at around \$1,000 apiece.

> **The bottom line** "The sooner you treat a wound—ideally within five days of getting cut—the less likely it is to scar," says Valerie Callender, M.D.

