PATIENT INFORMATION

TCA CROSS

TREATMENT OF DEEP ACNE AND PIERCING SCARS

Cutis Clinic

ABOUT THE TREATMENT

Small, deep scars most commonly occur following acne or piercings. TCA CROSS (Chemical Reconstruction of Skin Scars) is a targeted treatment in which a high-concentration solution of trichloroacetic acid (TCA) is applied directly into the base of the scar.

The treatment induces a controlled chemical injury, leading to breakdown of fibrotic scar tissue and stimulation of the skin's natural healing response with new connective tissue formation (collagen). As a result, the scar may gradually contract, lift from below, and become less visible

TCA CROSS is primarily used for:

- ice-pick scars
- narrow boxcar scars
- piercing scars

Where other treatment modalities often provide limited benefit.

PRE-TREATMENT CONSULTATION AND CONSENT

After reading this patient information, you will be offered a consultation to assess whether TCA CROSS is an appropriate treatment for you, or whether alternative treatment options are considered more suitable.

During the consultation, indication, expected outcome, risks, and possible alternative treatments are reviewed. You will receive oral information and have the opportunity to ask questions. You are welcome to bring a companion.

There is no statutory reflection period, as TCA CROSS is not classified as a cosmetic surgical procedure. Informed consent may therefore be given at the time of consultation.

Indication, treatment plan, and consent are documented in the patient record in accordance with applicable regulations.

The treatment is not performed in cases of:

- pregnancy or breastfeeding
- active skin infection in the treatment area
- pronounced tendency to keloid scarring

PREPARATION BEFORE TREATMENT

- Attend without makeup on the treatment area
- Facial hair should be removed; men are advised to shave the area the day before
- Avoid active skincare products (e.g. retinoids, acids) in the treatment area on the day of treatment

THE PROCEDURE

- Photographic documentation of each treated scar is performed prior to treatment as part of medical record documentation
- A high-concentration TCA solution (typically 80–90%) is selectively applied into the base of the scar using a fine applicator
- The treatment is associated with a brief stinging or burning sensation
- The acid self-neutralizes within seconds and does not require external neutralization

Multiple scars may be treated in the same session. The procedure itself typically takes only a few minutes. An antibiotic ointment is applied afterwards.

AFTER THE TREATMENT

Immediately after treatment, a white reaction ("frosting") appears in the scar, along with redness and mild swelling. Most patients can resume sedentary work the same day.

After a few days, a small scab forms over the treated scar. The scab usually detaches within 7–14 days but may persist for up to 2–3 weeks in some cases. When the scab falls off, the scar may temporarily appear more prominent before gradual improvement occurs.

It is important not to pick or scratch the area, as this increases the risk of infection and adverse scarring.

Sun protection:

- Avoid direct sun exposure for the first 5 days
- Thereafter, apply SPF 30+ daily for at least 1 month

Aftercare:

- Clean the area daily with a mild facial cleanser
- Hair washing is permitted as usual
- Apply Fucidin® ointment three times daily until the scab has detached
- Skincare products with active ingredients (e.g. retinol/retinoids, AHA acids) may be resumed no earlier than 2 weeks after treatment

Failure to follow aftercare instructions may increase the risk of complications and negatively affect the treatment outcome.

SIDE EFFECTS AND COMPLICATIONS

TCA CROSS is generally a safe treatment with a low risk of complications. As with all medical procedures, side effects may occur. The occurrence of side effects or complications does not in itself indicate malpractice.

Common side effects:

- stinging and discomfort during and shortly after treatment
- redness, warmth, and swelling (typically resolving over days)
- mild oozing during the first 1–2 days
- temporary redness with clear demarcation from untreated skin

Rare side effects:

- bacterial infection (increasing pain, redness, warmth, swelling, fever)
- viral infection, typically herpes simplex
- pigmentary changes (hyper- or hypopigmentation), particularly in darker skin types or patients with known pigment sensitivity
- limited or absent treatment effect

Very rare side effects:

- worsening of scar formation, most often related to infection (may be permanent)
- In case of signs of infection, increasing pain, or other concerning reactions, the clinic must be contacted or medical attention sought.

RESULTS AND FURTHER TREATMENT

The outcome is evaluated once the skin has returned to normal color and texture. Improvement develops gradually as healing and connective tissue formation progress.

TCA CROSS can be repeated once the skin has healed, typically after 4–6 weeks. Most patients require approximately 3–4 sessions to achieve a satisfactory result.

Results vary between individuals and depend on scar type, depth, and the skin's regenerative capacity. In very deep scars, surgical treatment (e.g. punch excision) or combination therapy may be appropriate. Once scars are sufficiently elevated, laser or RF microneedling may be used as adjunctive treatments for surface refinement.

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REVISION OF PATIENT INFORMATION

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This document will be reviewed no later than January 1, 2028, or earlier if required due to significant changes in clinical practice, treatment protocols, or applicable regulatory requirements.