

OASIS Alert

READER QUESTION ~ When Does A Surgical Wound Become A Scar?

Question: How do we know when a surgical wound goes from "fully granulating" to "healed" and is no longer counted as a surgical wound at all, but just as a surgical scar?

Answer: With the new changes to the **Wound Ostomy Continence Nurses Society** Surgical Wound Guidance, which removes the healing ridge as an assessment criteria, you have to rely on the **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services'** question and answer number 107, says consultant **Deborah Chisholm** with Redmond, WA-based **OASIS Answers**.

"A wound no longer qualifies as a surgical wound when it is completely healed (thus becoming a scar)," CMS instructs. So if you admit a patient with one surgical wound and during the episode it "heals and becomes a scar," at discharge the answer to M0482 (Does this patient have a surgical wound?) would be 0 (No), Chisholm illustrates.

Learn How to Define a Scar

One way to look at this is to ask if the wound has a defined, visible scar or keloid, suggests **Phyllis Bonham**, CWOCN at the **Medical University of South Carolina** in Charleston. And even though a healing ridge is no longer part of the definition of a fully granulating/healing wound for OASIS purposes, it is still a helpful landmark, says consultant **Lisa Selman-Holman** with Denton, TX-based **Selman-Holman & Associates**. "A fully granulating wound will have an induration of approximately 1 cm on either side of the incision. Once the healing ridge is gone, then the wound becomes a scar," she explains.