

Let's Talk About...

Infantile hemangiomas

What is an infantile hemangioma?

Infantile hemangiomas (hee-man-gee-OH-muhs) are birthmarks that form on a baby's skin during the first few months of life. Hemangiomas can grow anywhere on the scalp, face, or body. They are benign (not cancerous) and grow quickly until a baby is about 6 months old.

What causes an infantile hemangioma?

An infantile hemangioma is caused by extra blood vessels that collect in the skin. Babies are more likely to have an infantile hemangioma if they are female and were born prematurely. Caucasian babies are also more likely to have infantile hemangiomas.

What does an infantile hemangioma look like?

Superficial hemangiomas start as white, pink, or red areas on the skin. They quickly grow into bright red raised lumps. Superficial hemangiomas are sometimes called strawberry marks because of their color and bumpy surface.

Deep hemangiomas grow under the skin, have a smooth surface, and may look blue. Most hemangiomas are combinations of superficial and deep sores. Hemangiomas present when a baby is born are called congenital hemangiomas.

Will an infantile hemangioma go away on its own?

Many infantile hemangiomas become less red, flatter, and softer when your baby is 6–18 months old. Half of hemangiomas will look much better when your child is 5 years old. The other half will continue to improve, and most hemangiomas look significantly better when your child is 10 years old.



Are there complications with infantile hemangiomas?

Most hemangiomas don't cause any problems, but some can bleed when the hemangioma's skin breaks down. If this happens, stop the bleeding with continuous pressure for 15 minutes.

In rare cases, hemangiomas can cause problems with seeing, breathing, eating, or hearing. However, this depends on the hemangioma's size and location.

Does my child's infantile hemangioma need to be treated?

Your child's healthcare provider will tell you whether the hemangioma needs to be treated. This depends on:

- Your child's age
- The size and location of the hemangioma
- How quickly the hemangioma is growing
- Whether the hemangioma may cause problems

The healthcare provider may treat the hemangioma if the skin is scarring, if it is an open sore, or if it may cause infection.

How are infantile hemangiomas treated?

If your child's healthcare provider tells you the hemangioma needs to be treated, there are several options.

- **Topical steroids:** These can prevent some small, thin hemangiomas from growing.
- **Topical beta-blockers:** Timolol drops applied to small hemangiomas can prevent some of them from growing and help them fade and shrink.
- **Steroid injections:** Small hemangiomas can be injected with steroids to slow their growth.
- **Propranolol:** This blood pressure-lowering medicine is taken by mouth and prevents new blood vessels from growing.
- **Oral steroids:** Although usually replaced by other options, oral steroids are still used in some cases. Your child's healthcare provider will tell you if your child can use these.
- **Laser treatments:** Lasers can help bleeding hemangiomas heal and may also remove redness after the hemangioma shrinks.
- **Surgery:** A surgeon can remove hemangiomas in problem areas or repair scarring or excess skin. However, surgery also leaves a scar and is not usually recommended.

Talk to your child's healthcare provider about these treatments. Some have side effects, and it may be better to wait for your child's hemangioma to improve before trying a treatment.

Notes

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