

Let's Talk About...

Skin disorder: Nevus sebaceous

What is a nevus sebaceous?

A nevus sebaceous [NEE-vus seh-BAY-shus] is an uncommon pink-yellow or yellow-orange birthmark, usually on the scalp or face. It is congenital (there at birth), and a doctor usually notices it right after birth. However, you or the doctor may not notice a subtle nevus sebaceous until your child is older.

What does a nevus sebaceous look like?

A nevus sebaceous:

- Is usually smooth in babies and young children
- Does not grow hair when it's on your child's scalp
- Can vary in shape and size
- Is usually flat in a newborn but can become thicker over time
- May sometimes look rough and bumpy, like a wart

If your child has a nevus sebaceous, it does not spread to other areas of the skin.

What causes a nevus sebaceous?

A nevus sebaceous occurs when there is a genetic change in the skin. This means that the nevus sebaceous area is different from the rest of the body. It is not inherited and can't be passed to others.

How is nevus sebaceous diagnosed?

A dermatologist will look at your child's skin and decide whether they have a nevus sebaceous. Sometimes, they may need to take a small piece of the skin and look at it under a microscope (called a skin biopsy) before diagnosis.

How is a nevus sebaceous treated?

Your child's dermatologist will look at the nevus sebaceous regularly to see if it is changing. If they notice lumps in the nevus, they may need to do a biopsy or remove part of the nevus to see why it is changing.

The dermatologist doesn't usually remove the nevus sebaceous through surgery because it isn't often harmful to your child. If the dermatologist does recommend removing it, discuss the benefits and risks with them, including scarring and infection. They may wait to remove the nevus sebaceous until your child is older so they can use local anesthesia (numbing medicine) instead of a more invasive surgery.

What problems can occur with a nevus sebaceous?

Most children with a nevus sebaceous do not have any problems from their birthmark. The vast majority of nevus sebaceous growths are benign (not cancerous), but rarely, they can become malignant (cancerous) in early adulthood. The dermatologist will watch the nevus sebaceous carefully and tell you if it needs to be removed.

