

Let's Talk About...

Propranolol for Infantile Hemangiomas

What is an infantile hemangioma?

An infantile [IN-fan-tahyl] hemangioma [hi-man-jee-oh-muhs] is a non-cancerous collection of blood vessels in the skin. It is similar to a birthmark but usually isn't visible at birth. When it first appears, it may look like a small bruise or red bump. It usually grows rapidly for several months before it starts to slowly improve and fade away.

When does it need to be treated?

Most hemangiomas do not require treatment. However, some do require treatment because of their potential to cause problems, such as:

- Affecting an important body function like breathing, vision, or eating
- The skin over the hemangioma starts to break down
- Growing too large
- A risk of permanent scarring or affecting your child's appearance



How is it treated?

Propranolol [proh-PRAN-uh-lol] has become the most commonly used medication for the treatment of serious complications from hemangiomas. Read about possible benefits, risks, and complications below.

Possible benefits	Risks and possible complications
<p>Propranolol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes blood vessels narrower and decreases the amount of blood flowing through them. This can make the hemangioma softer and less red. • Slows the growth of hemangioma cells, which can shrink the size of the hemangioma over time. • Acts quickly. Most patients show improvement within the first few days to weeks of being on the medication. 	<p>If used properly, propranolol is a safe and effective medication for the treatment of infantile hemangiomas. However, like taking any medication, propranolol can increase certain risks and possible complications, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slowing the heart or lowering blood pressure. However, most children continue to have a normal heart rate and blood pressure. • Temporary narrowing of the airways, which can cause wheezing and coughing. • Sleep problems like difficulty falling or staying asleep, or nightmares. • Lowering blood sugar (rare). To help prevent this, propranolol should always be given right after a meal or snack. • Other possible side effects (rare) include diarrhea, constipation, and cool hands and feet.

How is propranolol taken?

Propranolol is taken by mouth, most often as a liquid. The dose given depends on your child's weight. It is given 2 or 3 times per day, 6 to 8 hours apart. **Propranolol should always be given with food.**

How long will my child need propranolol?

Your child's treatment will depend upon their unique situation. Most children will need the medication until they reach about 12 to 15 months of age. Your child's healthcare provider may choose to give lower doses over time to see how the hemangioma responds.

It is difficult to predict how a hemangioma will change over time, but most hemangiomas improve significantly by 5 to 7 years of age. Some hemangiomas may continue to improve until about 10 years of age.

Are there any alternatives?

Your child's healthcare provider may consider other types of treatments if needed or if propranolol doesn't have the desired effect. Ask your provider about other therapies, if needed.

Questions for my doctor

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Notes

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