



Vernon Pediatrics

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What is an Infantile Hemangioma?

An infantile hemangioma is a type of a birthmark made up of blood vessels that grow quickly.

Infantile Hemangiomas:

- Can look like red, raised spots on the skin or deep blue masses under the skin.
- Are not cancer (benign).
- Are very common (4% of children have them)
- Are usually on the head and neck but can be on other body parts.
- Usually appear in the first few weeks after birth.

What causes Infantile Hemangiomas?

Have an unknown cause.

What should I know about Infantile Hemangiomas?

- All infantile hemangiomas go through a phase where they grow and shrink. The growth phase (proliferation) happens during first year of age. The fastest growth usually happens during the first 4 months but can be last longer.
- After one year, the shrinking phase (involution) begins. In this phase the birthmark slowly gets smaller, softer to touch, and fades in colour. How long it takes to shrink is different for everyone. Most infantile hemangiomas are done shrinking by the time the child is between 4 and 6 years of age. Some birthmarks can take longer to finish their shrinking phase.
- It's hard to know how a birthmark will look at the end of the shrinking phase. Some infantile hemangiomas might need treatment to make them look better.

How are Infantile Hemangiomas treated?

Over 90% of hemangiomas never cause a problem or need treatment. Some children might need treatment right away. It depends on where the hemangioma is and how big it is.

Some of the ways to treat a hemangioma may include:

- **Medicine-** (e.g., beta blockers) given to stop the growth phase - these treatments are given to children younger than 1 year of age. If their hemangioma is at risk of complications.
- **Surgery-** to remove some or all the hemangioma-this is rare.
- **Laser surgery-** can help the birthmark fade after its done shrinking and is usually done later in life.

How well a treatment works depends on how old your child is, where the infantile hemangioma is, and what phase the birthmark is in. Your doctor will talk to you about the best treatment(s) for your child.

What can I do to help?

Having treatment or waiting and watching for a hemangioma to shrink can take a long time. This can be hard for parents, so a lot of patience is needed.