

Hemangiomas of Infancy

Hemangiomas are common in infancy. They usually fade away as your child grows.

What is a hemangioma?

A hemangioma (hee-man-gee-o-ma) is a collection of extra blood vessels. It is one of the most common skin problems in children under age 1.

Hemangiomas may not be present at birth. They often appear during the first 2 months after birth. When they occur at this time, they are called “hemangiomas of infancy.” Hemangiomas may be anywhere on the body. A hemangioma is usually not painful unless an ulcer or a sore develops on it. We do not know what causes hemangiomas.

If a hemangioma is red, then it is in the top skin layers (superficial). If it is blue, then it is under the skin (deep). Often, it is a combination of these (mixed).



How do hemangiomas grow?

Hemangiomas of infancy can grow for several months and rarely grow after one year of age. Most of the growth happens in the first 6 months of life. From 6 months to a year, they may grow with the baby or stay the same size. After age 1, they usually begin a long, slow fading process known as “involution.” This process can last from 3 to 12 years. About 50 percent fade by age 5 and about 70 percent fade completely by age 7.

While most hemangiomas eventually fade, they may not go away completely. They can leave behind some redness, textural changes, a residual fatty mass or scar, or extra skin. Early intervention can sometimes reduce the need for treatment at a later time.

1 of 3

To Learn More

- Vascular Anomalies
206-987-4606
- Dermatology
206-987-2158
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



Are hemangiomas harmful?

While some hemangiomas require no treatment, others can cause problems with vision, breathing, feeding, or have an undesirable appearance. Infants who have multiple hemangiomas (hemangiomatosis) may be checked for lesions inside the body (like on the liver) or for other medical problems (such as hypothyroidism).

Hemangiomas that grow inside the body may require treatment.

Bleeding

If the skin over the top of the hemangioma is injured, it may bleed. If this happens, put direct pressure over the bleeding for 5 to 10 minutes and the bleeding should stop. A lot of bleeding is very rare. After the bleeding stops, apply petroleum jelly or antibiotic ointment to the area and call the clinic. You may apply a band-aid. If the bleeding does not stop, then call your child's provider as soon as possible or take your child to the emergency room.

Ulcers

A hemangioma can develop a sore, bleed, or be painful, even when there has **not** been an injury. When there is bleeding or pain in a hemangioma without injury, it is likely an ulcer or a sore. This can happen to some hemangiomas, such as:

- If the hemangioma grows very quickly and the skin becomes irritated
- If the hemangioma is in an area with lots of rubbing (friction), like the diaper area

You may notice brown or tan material on the hemangioma. The skin over the hemangioma may look dry, flaky or cracked.

If this happens, apply petroleum jelly or antibiotic ointment to the area and contact the clinic. Ulcers can cause scarring. They usually heal with medical or laser treatment.

Avoid ulcers by reducing rubbing (friction) to the area. You can do this by avoiding tight fitting clothing or putting a diaper cream or petroleum jelly on hemangiomas that are in areas that get a lot of friction, like the diaper area.

How are hemangiomas diagnosed?

Hemangiomas are diagnosed by a healthcare provider looking at the area, a medical history and sometimes imaging tests (ultrasound, and rarely MRI or CT scan).

If your child has multiple hemangiomas on their skin, the provider may have an ultrasound done to look for hemangiomas inside the body.

Sometimes, hemangiomas can look similar to other lesions. Your provider may need to remove a small piece of the tissue and examine it (skin biopsy) in order to confirm that it is a hemangioma.

How are hemangiomas treated?

Our health care providers treat hemangiomas as a team. These treatments are based on your child's medical needs and your family's decisions.

- Small hemangiomas often do not require any treatment, depending on location.
- Larger hemangiomas, or ones that cause problems with breathing, feeding, vision, or are in areas that affect how your child looks (cosmetically sensitive areas) need to be treated.

What are the treatments for hemangiomas?

- Watch and wait (observation)
- Medicine used on the skin (topical treatment)
- Medicine taken by mouth (oral treatment)
- Laser treatment
- Surgery

Some hemangiomas need more than 1 treatment, like medicine and laser, or medicine and surgery. Not all treatments are recommended for all hemangiomas. Your provider will talk with you about the treatment options recommended for your child.

When do I call the clinic?

- If your child's hemangioma starts to bleed.
- If your child's hemangioma turns into an ulcer or sore.
- If you have any questions about your child's hemangioma treatment plan.

How do I call the clinic?

Call the nurse line at the clinic where your child was seen.

Vascular Anomalies

- Seattle, Bellevue and North Clinic in Everett: 206-987-4606, option 4

Dermatology

- Seattle and Bellevue: 206-987-2158, option 4
- North Clinic in Everett: 425-783-6200, ask for the dermatology nurse line
- South Clinic in Federal Way: 253-838-5878, ask for the dermatology nurse line