

## Patient Information Leaflet: Haemangiomas

### What are Haemangiomas?

Haemangiomas are benign (non-cancerous) vascular tumours made up of a cluster of blood vessels. They often appear as red or purplish marks on the skin. Haemangiomas are frequently found in infants and children, typically developing within the first few weeks of life. They can also be acquired through adult life, especially as we get older. Occasionally they can erupt dramatically at sites of trauma, for example on a finger tip after a rose thorn injury. They may occur anywhere on the body but are most commonly seen on the face, head, neck, and trunk.

### Types of Haemangiomas:

1. **Superficial Haemangiomas:** These are located just beneath the skin and appear as bright red or raised marks. They can be flat or have a bumpy texture.
2. **Deep Haemangiomas:** These are located deeper in the skin and may appear bluish or skin-toned rather than red. They can be less noticeable but still require monitoring.
3. **Mixed Haemangiomas:** These contain both superficial and deep components and can exhibit characteristics of both types.

### Causes:

The exact cause of haemangiomas is not entirely understood. They represent an abnormal growth of blood vessels which may occur during foetal development (Infant onset), have genetic factors and age and hormonal influences may also play a role.

### Symptoms:

- A red or purple raised mark on the skin.
- Round and symmetrical
- Dome shaped
- May appear dark and almost black until a bright light is shone on them.

### Diagnosis:

Haemangiomas are typically diagnosed based on their appearance during a physical examination. In some cases, imaging studies such as ultrasound, MRI, or CT scans may be conducted to assess the depth and extent of the haemangioma, especially if treatment is being considered.

### Management and Treatment Options:

Most haemangiomas do not require treatment. Childhood haemangiomas often shrink and fade over time (involution). Adult haemangiomas tend to persist and some lesions enlarge with time. However, in cases where the haemangioma is large, causing functional problems, or persisting beyond the expected time frame, treatment options may include:

1. **Observation:** Many haemangiomas require no immediate treatment and can simply be monitored for changes.
2. **Medications:**
  - **Oral Propranolol:** A beta-blocker that has been shown to effectively reduce the size of haemangiomas. This treatment has become common for problematic haemangiomas in children.
  - **Topical Beta-Blockers:** In some cases, topical treatments like timolol may be used for superficial haemangiomas, particularly in children.
3. **Electro-cautery:** Cautery devices can be used for small haemangiomas to destroy the blood vessels in the skin.

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4. **Laser Therapy:** Certain types of lasers can be used to target and reduce the redness and size of haemangiomas, particularly useful for superficial lesions as they shrink.
5. **Surgical Removal:** In rare cases, especially if the haemangioma is large or causing complications after involution, surgical excision may be necessary.

## Self-Care and Monitoring:

- **Regular Check-ups for Children:** If your child has a haemangioma, regular follow-up appointments with a healthcare provider are essential to monitor its growth and resolution.
- **Protect the Area:** Protecting the haemangioma from injury, especially if it is located in an area prone to trauma, can help avoid complications.

## When to Seek Medical Advice:

- If you notice rapid growth of the haemangioma.
- If the haemangioma bleeds, ulcerates, or shows signs of infection (redness, swelling, pain).
- If there are concerns about vision, hearing, or function in areas affected by the haemangioma.

## Conclusion:

Haemangiomas are common, benign vascular lesions. Childhood haemangiomas typically resolve on their own without intervention; Adult haemangiomas tend to persist and can enlarge with time. Understanding their nature and maintaining regular monitoring can help ensure that any concerns are addressed promptly. If you have questions or concerns regarding haemangiomas, please consult your dermatologist for guidance and additional support.

