

Dermatologist explains the red birthmark, hemangioma

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A hemangioma, also known as a strawberry birthmark, is a bright red birthmark that shows up in the first or second week of life. It looks like a rubbery bump and is made up of extra blood vessels in the skin.

In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Megha Tollefson, a Mayo Clinic pediatric dermatologist, explains what [caregivers](#) should know if their child has a hemangioma.

Dr. Tollefson says they're technically tumors, but parents shouldn't let that name or their stark appearance worry them.

"They're actually the most common tumor of infancy, happening anywhere from one in 20 to one in 50 [babies](#). They are just a collection of blood vessels that grows in the first part of a baby's life," says Dr. Tollefson.

They're more common among babies born preterm. And they can appear anywhere on the body, but commonly involve the head and neck areas.

Another feature that might alarm parents is the rapid rate of growth. Dr. Tollefson says hemangiomas will continue to grow until children are about 6 to 9 months old. At that point, they typically stabilize, then go away slowly.

"About 90% of hemangiomas resolve—or involute is what we call it—by age 4. So it's a pretty slow process," says Dr. Tollefson.

Treatment usually isn't needed. However, Dr. Tollefson says if the [hemangioma](#) interferes with vision, other functions, has the potential to be cosmetically disfiguring, is large or is growing rapidly, babies should be evaluated for treatment.

"There are really two main treatments that we use now. The gold standard of treatment for a baby that needs a medicine by mouth is a heart medicine called propranolol."

"That type of medicine is called a beta blocker. There's also a topical

form of that medicine, and there are some babies for whom that might be appropriate."

Later in life, [laser surgery](#) may be an option to treat residual hemangiomas. But Dr. Tollefson says that is not always needed.

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