Birthmarks

Birthmarks come in different sizes, shapes, and colors. Most are harmless. They usually do not need treatment and may fade or disappear with time.

FORCEPS OR BIRTH CANAL INJURIES

Babies whose births were helped with forceps may have marks or bruises on the sides of the head. They may also develop lumps under the skin that may take a couple weeks to get better. Sometimes injuries happen on the babies face just from coming through a tight birth canal. Small injures such as scrapes and puncture wounds also may appear on your baby if scalp monitors were used. These usually get better without treatment within several days.

MONGOLIAN SPOTS

Mongolian spots are smooth, flat, blue, or blue-gray birthmarks. These are common in dark skinned babies but may also be seen in Caucasians. They occur most often over the lower back and buttocks. They can be all sizes and shapes on all parts of the body. They often look like bruises. Most fade away by the time the child reaches school age. Some persist into adult life.

STORK BITES, SALMON PATCHES, ANGEL KISSES, PINK BIRTHMARKS

The above names all refer to common, flat, pink patches that occur mainly on the back of your baby's neck, the upper eyelids, the upper lip, the bridge of your baby's nose or between the eyebrows. The ones in front are often referred to as an angel's kiss. The birthmarks on the bridge of the nose and eyelids usually clear completely over a year or two. Those on the forehead running from the bridge of the nose up to the hairline usually last into adult life. These can sometimes be treated with laser to lighten them. Birthmarks on the nape of the neck also usually clear. About a quarter of those on the neck remain into adult life.

STRAWBERRY HEMANGIOMAS

Hemangiomas are raised, bluish, reddish, or purple birthmarks formed by a collection of blood vessels. They can be any size or shape. They usually start after 3 weeks of age. They become larger for a year and then fade away over the next couple years. Hemangiomas are usually not treated for the first couple of years of life because most go away without treatment. Most of them grow for about a year. Then they usually turn white and start shrinking. Treatment may be necessary for large hemangiomas on the face. Some hemangiomas are called strawberry marks. There is a small risk of bleeding with injury.

CAFÉ-AU-LAIT SPOTS

Café-au-lait spots are flat, brown birthmarks. They are usually oval in shape. The spots can increase in size, number, and darkness throughout childhood. Having one to three café-au-lait spots is common. About one in five healthy children have them. Each spot of significant size after the first three is less common. These spots can be linked to a neurological problem (*neurofibromatosis*). Your caregiver will let you know if this is a concern.

PORT-WINE STAINS

Port-wine stains are pink-red at birth and then become a darker red-purple color. Port-wine stains are birthmarks formed by blood vessels that did not develop properly. They can be large. Light port-wine stains may fade, but most get bigger as the child grows. Sometimes they get thicker and darker.

MOLES

Moles are growths on the skin that are usually brown or black. Moles can appear anywhere on the skin. They may be alone or in groups. Moles happen when cells in the skin grow in a cluster instead of spreading throughout the skin. Most of these are not cancerous (*benign*). Bring these to your caregiver's attention if they

change size, color, or shape rapidly.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

Your baby has changes in a birthmark which cause you to worry.

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