

Congenital Hemangiomas

What is a congenital hemangioma? A congenital hemangioma is a non-cancerous (benign) tumor that is present at birth. Some congenital hemangiomas may be seen before a baby is born on an ultrasound. We do not know what causes congenital hemangiomas. Congenital hemangiomas do not grow after birth.

What do congenital hemangiomas look like? Congenital hemangiomas are usually found on the head or on the arms and legs near a joint. They are usually round or oval and pink to blue in color with pale-colored skin around them. They may be flat or look like raised growth from the skin, and feel warmer to touch than the rest of the body.

There are two major types of congenital hemangiomas:

Rapidly involuting congenital hemangioma (RICH): These are present at birth and usually start shrinking soon after birth. The shrinking is usually completed by the time a child is 12-18 months old. Watch for changes in the hemangioma. In many babies, shrinking may begin within the first week of life. There may be crusting and scaling on the surface of the hemangioma. To prevent this, ointment may be applied to the surface of the hemangioma several times a day. Once the shrinking is complete, any extra skin may be surgically removed if it does not return to normal by 3-4 years of age.

Noninvoluting congenital hemangioma (NICH): These hemangiomas are much less common than the RICH hemangiomas. They are seen at birth and will grow as the child grows. They will not become smaller in size. Surgical removal is the recommended treatment. If the NICH is large, a radiologist may need to perform a special procedure before the surgery. This procedure will help decrease the blood flow to the area to reduce blood loss during surgery.