

Depending on the size and location of the haemangioma, there may be little sign it ever existed.

Who do I contact if I am worried about treatment?

If you have any problems or concerns, please call the dermatology clinic on 020 7288 5062 Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

At other times, please seek advice from your local GP or our emergency department.

Treating haemangiomas ('strawberry marks') with topical Timolol

A patient's guide

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What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet explains how haemangiomas can be treated with topical Timolol, a drug traditionally used to treat increased pressure in the eye (glaucoma).

What is a haemangioma?

A haemangioma is a collection of small blood vessels that occur under the skin. They are sometimes called 'strawberry marks' because the colour and surface looks a bit like a strawberry.

How are haemangiomas usually treated?

Most haemangiomas do not need treatment because they will go away on their own. Drugs called beta-blockers are now the first-line treatment to shrink them when treatment is needed. These drugs are historically used to treat high blood pressure and can be given orally (by mouth) or topically (directly on the skin). The more complicated haemangiomas, for example near the eyes and lips, are usually treated with a drug given orally. This needs special monitoring.

A topical beta-blocker, called Timolol, has been used more recently to treat less complicated haemangiomas. Timolol is usually used to treat high pressure within

the eyes. It causes the blood vessels within the haemangioma to tighten and therefore reduces the amount of blood flowing through them. It has the advantage of very few side effects and does not need special monitoring.

How is Timolol given?

Timolol maleate usually comes in a gel-forming solution (0.5 per cent concentration). This format of the drug is easier to apply to the skin.

The gel is applied directly to the haemangioma once daily. Wash your hands with soap and water before and after applying the gel. Place one drop directly onto the haemangioma and then gently spread the gel all over the surface.

What are the side effects of Timolol?

Topical Timolol is extremely safe and side effects are very rare. These include:

- slow heart rate (bradycardia)
- low blood pressure (hypotension)
- wheezing and coughing
- tightening of blood vessels (vasoconstriction), resulting in fingers and toes feeling cold and looking blue.

- sleep disturbance
- low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia)

You should report any side effects as the dose of Timolol may need to be adjusted or on rare occasions stopped.

Are there any tests needed before starting Timolol?

Usually no specific tests are required before starting treatment. Sometimes, if your child has a number of haemangiomas, then a special scan known as an ultrasound scan will take place. This is a simple test to look for haemangiomas deeper in the body.

Your child will usually have clinical photographs taken before treatment to monitor the response to treatment.

How long does the treatment last and what are the success rates?

Treatment will usually last between six months and one year. You will be reviewed at intervals (usually two to three months) to check the response to treatment.

Approximately 70 per cent of haemangiomas will disappear by the age of seven years.