

Treating Birthmarks

Some babies are born with “stork bites” that disappear on their own, while others don’t develop strawberry spots (hemangioma) or port wine stains (PWS) until their second year of life. New York dermatologist Joshua Fox assures parents these marks don’t necessarily get passed from generation to generation. Regardless of how or when they appear, Fox says, “The most common side effect of birthmarks is parental guilt.”

While the majority of birthmarks are harmless, Fox recommends a pediatrician visit if one should develop. Port wine stains on the eyelids, forehead or scalp especially can be warning signs of an underlying condition. Depending on the location, strawberry spots can suddenly

grow big enough to interfere with eating, breathing, vision or mobility. This dense collection of veins also tends to bleed profusely if broken.

Since 90% of hemangiomas shrink on their own by adolescence, doctors often take a wait-and-see approach to less severe cases. If treatment is recommended, advances in laser technology provide a safe and effective cure — just be sure you consult a professional who’s done many laser treatments on children. The course of therapy depends on the location, size, type of birthmark and speed of growth, but early intervention means less scarring, discoloration and texture changes in your baby’s skin. — CC