



# Current Perspectives on Pediatric Hemangiomas: Diagnosis and Management

Strano Ozer\*

Department of Pediatrics, University of Nottingham, UK

## DESCRIPTION

Pediatric hemangiomas, commonly referred to as infantile hemangiomas, are the most prevalent benign vascular tumors occurring in infants. These growths typically appear within the first few weeks of life, characterized by a rapid proliferation phase followed by a slower involution phase. Initially, they may manifest as small, red or bluish spots on the skin, which can grow rapidly in the first few months, forming raised, spongy masses that are often referred to as “strawberry marks” due to their appearance. While the exact cause of hemangiomas is not fully understood, it is believed that they result from abnormal angiogenesis, the process by which new blood vessels form. Risk factors include female gender, prematurity, low birth weight, and Caucasian ethnicity. Most pediatric hemangiomas are superficial and asymptomatic, requiring no treatment as they tend to regress spontaneously by the time a child reaches school age, leaving minimal or no residual skin changes. However, hemangiomas that are large, rapidly growing, or located in critical areas such as the face, airway, or near vital organs, may necessitate medical intervention due to potential complications like ulceration, bleeding, or functional impairment. Treatment options include oral beta-blockers, which have proven highly effective in reducing the size and proliferation of hemangiomas. In some cases, laser therapy or surgical excision may be warranted. The diagnosis of pediatric hemangiomas is typically clinical, based on their characteristic appearance and growth pattern. Imaging studies such as ultrasound or MRI may be utilized for deeper or atypical lesions to assess their extent and involvement with surrounding structures. Prognosis is generally excellent, with most hemangiomas resolving without significant complications. Parents and caregivers should be educated on the natural course of hemangiomas and the signs that necessitate further medical evaluation. Regular follow-up is essential to monitor the growth and regression of these lesions, ensuring timely intervention if necessary. These benign tumors of endothelial origin can manifest as superficial or deep lesions, ranging from small, innocuous marks to large, disfiguring masses.

While many hemangiomas involute spontaneously without intervention, some may require medical or surgical intervention to prevent complications or cosmetic concerns. Recent advances in understanding the pathophysiology of hemangiomas have shed light on their dynamic growth phases, characterized by rapid proliferation followed by a slower involution phase driven by endothelial apoptosis and fibrofatty replacement. The advent of propranolol, a non-selective beta-blocker, has revolutionized the management of problematic hemangiomas, particularly those causing functional impairment or cosmetic disfigurement. Propranolol therapy has been shown to accelerate involution and reduce the need for surgical intervention, underscoring its role as a first-line treatment for high-risk hemangiomas. Nevertheless, the variability in clinical presentation and response to treatment necessitates individualized management plans that may include watchful waiting, pharmacological intervention, or surgical excision, depending on the lesion’s size, location, and associated complications. Ongoing research into the genetic and molecular mechanisms underlying hemangioma development holds promise for identifying biomarkers predictive of disease progression and response to therapy, paving the way for personalized approaches in pediatric dermatology. Comprehensive care for children with hemangiomas extends beyond medical management to include psychosocial support for patients and families, addressing the emotional impact and quality-of-life considerations associated with these vascular anomalies. As our understanding of hemangiomas continues to evolve, collaborative efforts among dermatologists, pediatricians, and specialists in vascular anomalies will be essential in optimizing outcomes and advancing treatment strategies for affected children.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author’s declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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**Corresponding author** Strano Ozer, Department of Pediatrics, University of Nottingham, UK, E-mail: staroz@gmail.com

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