

Information leaflet for parents and carers

# Children having Propranolol treatment for reducing Haemangioma on the skin



By your side

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## What is Haemangioma?

A haemangioma is an abnormal collection of small blood vessels most commonly seen within the skin of the head, neck and trunk area but can be found in other areas of the body such as the liver, bowel or brain. The ones that occur within your child's skin are sometimes called a "strawberry" birth mark.

They may not be apparent at birth but may start out as red pin heads on your child's skin and then they will start to grow very rapidly soon after birth to resemble a strawberry. They can be shallow or deep on your child's skin or a combination of both.

Haemangiomas can grow rapidly with your child and may continue to grow until your child is one year of age but this will vary from child to child. Sometimes haemangiomas can ulcerate and bleed without being scratched or traumatised.

Ulceration does not always occur, however heavy bleeding may occur from an ulcerated part of the haemangioma and you may have to apply pressure to stop the bleeding should this happen. If this happens your child will require dressings to help the unhealed area to heal and your child may also be suitable for some medicine such as Propranolol. Your Consultant will advise you if your child requires this medicine. It is very rare that your child will need surgery to stop any bleeding whilst the haemangioma is in its early stage. Your Consultant will be able to advise you more on this.

## What is Propranolol and how does it work?

This is a medicine that is normally used to treat high blood pressure known as a Beta blocker. It has been used successfully in many parts of the world to treat the reduction of Haemangioma's in many children.

This medicine works by reducing the blood flow to the Haemangioma. This helps to reduce the colour so that it becomes less red and it will help to soften the skin.

This medicine also helps to stop the Haemangioma growing and will also help to reduce its size when given orally after a few weeks. Not all Haemangioma's are suitable for this form of treatment and your Consultant will advise you if your child is not suitable for this medicine.

If your child is given this medicine they will be monitored closely before, during and after treatment.

The benefits of Propranolol can usually be seen within a week of starting treatment. Only Haemangioma's which are obscuring your child's vision, obstructing the airway or are very large and ulcerating would be offered Propranolol medicine as a first line treatment.

Steroids are a second line treatment but are only used for babies who do not respond to Propranolol.

## Are there any side effects of this drug?

As with all medicines Propranolol can produce some side effects in your child, but these happen very rarely. It is important that you let your Consultant or Specialist nurse know if your child experiences any of the following symptoms whilst taking this medication. If you notice any of these symptoms then please contact your Consultant or the plastic surgery nursing team

- Hypoglycaemia. This is a low blood sugar and your child may become clammy and sweaty
- Bronchospasm. A temporary narrowing of child's chest which gives them a wheeze or a cough that they don't normally have
- Peripheral Vasoconstriction. This is reduced blood flow to your child's fingers and toes which may look blue or feel cold.
- Weakness and fatigue. You may notice that your child becomes floppy or disinterested in their surroundings
- Their sleep pattern is disturbed.
- Gastro-intestinal disturbances. Your child may become constipated or have diarrhoea

## What will happen to my child before taking Propranolol?

Your Consultant may will take a detailed history from you about your child and we will need to weigh your child before we start any treatment. This will help us to accurately prescribe the medicine your child will need.

It is important to remember that as your child grows then the dose of the Propranolol will change. This is so we can make sure that your child receives the right medicine dose as they grow. Your Consultant will advise you if your child has put on weight and will tell you if your child's medication dose needs to be change. They will also give you instructions on how your child needs to take their medicine.

You can expect your child to be weighed and have their urine tested every time you come to the hospital whilst they are on this medicine.

## Will my child need to stay in hospital?

We normally start this treatment on your child when you come to see the Consultant in the outpatient clinic so we don't expect you and your child to stay in hospital.

However some infants may need to stay in hospital and be monitored for two hours after the first dose has been given. This only happens if we know that your child has a cardiac problem or they have low blood pressure.

## Propranolol dosage for parents

Your child's medicine usually starts at 1mg/kg. This dose is usually given for a week, then this is usually 1mg/kg per day for the first week of your child's treatment

If your child is well after a week and does not have any side effects from the medicine then the dose will be increased to 2mg/kg.

You will be given some Propranolol medicine to take home with you when you leave the hospital and instructions about how to give your child the medicine and how often you need to give this to your child when you are home.

This is normal when we start this treatment. We do this as we need to make sure that your child can tolerate this medicine and they do not have any side effects from the medicine.

If your child is well after a week then the dose of the medicine will be increased to, this dose will be increased to 2mgs/kg/day.

If your child is responding to the medicine and we can see results with your child's haemangioma then your child will stay on this higher dose.

Once your child has been started on their treatment you will be given an out patient appointment for 2-3 weeks for your Consultant to review your child.

# Important information for parents whilst your child is on this medicine and how you can help your child.

## Taking regular medicine

It is important that as a parent you understand how much medicine your child has to take and why they have to take this on a regular basis. Your Consultant will explain this to you before your child takes this medicine.

It is also important for you to look for any changes in your child whilst they are taking this medicine as they may become unwell. Like every medicine there can be some side effects.

## Feeding

It is important that you continue to give your child regular feeds throughout the day as this will help them to put on weight which will help as part of their normal development.

Giving your child regular milk feed, especially a night time feed, prevents their blood sugar dropping low at night.

## Wheezing

If your child becomes chesty whilst they are on this medicine they may have to have an inhaler to help relieve these symptoms.

It is important that you tell your Consultant or your GP straight away as the Propranolol medicine and this inhaler can make your child's wheezing worse.

## **Teething**

If your baby is starting to teeth then it is important that you do NOT give teething gels whilst your baby is on Propranolol.

We recommend that they have teething powder and Paracetamol only to help with the pain whilst they are teething.

## **Over the counter medicines**

Always tell your local pharmacist if your child is teething and your child is on Propranolol as they will know what your child can have over the counter.

Always tell your Consultant or your GP if you are giving your baby any other medicines or any medicine over the counter products when using Propranolol as this may interfere with the medicine for your child's haemangioma.

## **If your child becomes unwell at home**

If your child suddenly becomes unwell at home then please ring 999 so that your child can be urgently assessed in the emergency department. This very rarely happens but you should be aware that you may need to do this if you are worried about your child whilst at home whilst they are on this medication.

## What happens if my child does not respond to treatment?

It is important to remember that whilst many children do respond to the medicine they are given to help reduce their haemangioma, there are some children who do not respond to the treatment.

If this happens your child may have a 3mg/kg dose of propranolol to see if the haemangioma responds to the medicine.

However if we feel that your child is not responding to the medicine then your Consultant will discuss this with you and will advise you further on what treatment your child can receive.

## How long does the treatment last?

Your Consultant will advise you on when your child can start this medicine and will also tell you when your child does not need this medicine any more.

You can expect your child to be on this medicine for about one year depending on how your child responds to treatment.

When your child does not need to take this medicine any more you can expect your child's medicine to be gradually reduced rather than stopped straight away. This is to prevent any side effects from the medicine.

## Are there any alternatives to treatment with Propranolol?

Most Haemangioma's will have resolved (got smaller) and will have almost faded in colour by the time your child is 5 years of age.

Once the haemangioma has resolved you may not notice any change in your child's skin but sometimes your child's skin may look paler or be a little thinner than the rest of their skin. This is normal and your Consultant will be able to advise you further on this.

If you do not want your child to have the Propranolol medicine then we will keep a close eye on your child and review them every 6-12 months in your Consultant or Specialist nurse clinic.

If the haemangioma has resolved by the time your child is seven years of age, then there may not be a mark at all on your child's skin.

If there is still some residual haemangioma skin left on your child's skin then your Consultant will advise you further.

## Further Information

We hope this information will help you to understand about your child's medicine. If you feel you need any more information or have any concerns please contact the Clinical Nurse Specialist for Plastic Surgery on [0121 333 8117](tel:01213338117), or you can go through switchboard [0121 333 9999](tel:01213339999) and ask for bleep [55393](tel:55393) D Jones.

Further information and Internet access is available in the Child and Family Information Centre at the hospital.

Tel: [0121 333 8505](tel:01213338505)

Email [child.infoctr@bch.nhs.uk](mailto:child.infoctr@bch.nhs.uk)

The Birthmark support group can offer support and advice to parents of children with all types of birthmarks

[www.birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk](http://www.birthmarksupportgroup.org.uk)

Changing faces are another help and support group that can offer help and support of people living with a disfigurement

[www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

This leaflet has been produced by the Plastic Surgery Team at Birmingham Children's hospital.



## Looking after and sharing information about your child

We have a duty of care to help patients and families understand how information about them is kept and shared and we include the following information in all our patient leaflets:

Information is collected about patients relevant to their diagnosis, treatment and care. We store it in written records and electronically on computer. As a necessary part of that care and treatment we may have to share some patient information with other people and organisations who are either responsible or directly involved in the patient's care. This may involve taking the patient's information off site. We may also have to share some information for other purposes; such as research etc. Any information that is shared in this way will not identify the patient unless we have the patient's and parent's/carer's consent. If you have any questions and/or do not want us to share that information with others, please talk to the people looking after your child or contact PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 0121 333 8403.



**Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust**  
Steelhouse Lane Birmingham B4 6NH  
Telephone 0121 333 9999  
Fax: 0121 333 9998  
Website: [www.bwc.nhs.uk](http://www.bwc.nhs.uk)

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