

Port Wine Stains

What is a port wine stain (PWS)?

A PWS is a birthmark with an increased number of swollen blood vessels that create a reddish-purple discoloration of the skin. They are named for a type of dark red wine called port. These birthmarks are often found on the face but can happen anywhere on the body.

Will a PWS change?

These birthmarks do not fade away. They grow as your child grows. Sometimes, they can look darker or get thicker as your child gets older.

Will it affect other areas of my child's body?

PWSs are usually not related to other health problems, but in a small number of children, they can be associated with brain or eye problems. Your healthcare provider can talk with you about these problems in more detail if it affects your child.

What is the treatment?

The goal of treatment is to minimize the appearance of redness on the skin.

Pulsed dye laser therapy

Pulsed dye laser therapy works well for many PWSs. It helps to lighten the color and prevent darkening and thickening that sometimes happens over time.

This treatment often works better on the face and neck, rather than on the arms and legs. The laser works better for lighter port wine stains, but the darker purple marks can also be treated. It is suspected, but still unknown, if treating at an earlier age (before 1 year) can lead to better outcomes.

You can read more in our handout “Laser Treatment for Skin Conditions” seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE576.pdf.

Camouflage make-up

Camouflage or full coverage make-up like Covermark, Dermablend, Dermacol or Focallure Covermax can help hide the appearance of a PWS. They are available at department stores, WalMart and at online stores.

To Learn More

- Dermatology
206-987-2158
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org/patient-education

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



Seattle Children's
HOSPITAL • RESEARCH • FOUNDATION

Seattle Children's offers free interpreter services for patients, family members and legal representatives who are deaf or hard of hearing or speak a language other than English. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201. This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your healthcare provider.

© 2024 Seattle Children's Hospital, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.

2/24
PE2804