

Congenital nevus (Birthmark)

A congenital nevus (plural-nevi) is a type of birthmark. Congenital means something that is present in the skin at birth. Nevus is the medical word for a mole. Congenital nevi can appear anywhere on the body. They can range in size from a few millimeters to lesions which are quite large. The color ranges from tan to dark brown and they may be flat or quite bumpy.

Usually, congenital nevi do not cause any symptoms. With time, they slowly enlarge as the body grows. It was once believed that all congenital nevi should be surgically removed because of the rare cases of individual lesions becoming cancerous. In reality this problem was primarily confined to the very large lesions. In fact, the risk of small congenital nevi developing into cancer is very small and probably similar to any other mole turning cancerous.

Now, almost all small to medium congenital nevi are left alone. They can be continued to be observed clinically for growth or changing patterns. They can also be surgically removed should they become symptomatic or begin to change.

Some patients are concerned about the visual appearance of the growths. There are ways to electively remove congenital nevi and I can discuss the options with you. The potential benefit of removal however, must be weighed against the potential for scarring that can result depending on the location and the size.

Again, congenital nevi are benign proliferations and can be considered a type of beauty mark. In most cases, they require no treatment. If you have any other questions regarding these lesions, please do not hesitate to ask before you leave the office.

