



Port Wine Stains

Port-wine stains are capillary (small blood vessel) malformations. They are present at birth and remain throughout life. Some port wine stains are seen in combination with other blood vessel abnormalities or birthmarks. Port wine stains occur in 3 out of every 1,000 newborns (0.3%)

Port wine stains may occur anywhere on the body, but more frequently on the face. Each port wine stain is different in terms of size, color, and texture. Port wine stains may darken and thicken as the child grows older. They may develop nodules, which eventually need to be excised. Due to these changes, as well as for psychological and cosmetic concerns, it is often medically necessary to treat port wine stains with a laser. If not treated, 60 – 70% of lesions undergo these changes.

After several years of exploring treatment options, the current treatment of choice is pulse-dye laser therapy. The yellow-light of the pulse-dye lasers (Candela/Cynosure) is absorbed by the red color of the capillaries, heats up the vessels from the inside, and thus causes selective destruction of the vessels. The average patient can expect an 80% fade of the lesion after 6 to 8 treatments. There are a few patients who are yellow-light resistant and will not fade. The best response to laser therapy generally occurs on the face and neck. The less impressive results occur further from the heart (i.e., arms and legs).