

What is dermal melanocytosis?

Dermal melanocytosis is a common type of birthmark. These birthmarks used to be called “Mongolian spots”. They appear as a flat, blue-to-gray patch.

Dermal melanocytosis birthmarks are often on the back or buttocks. They can also be seen on other parts of the body. These spots are usually present at birth. They tend to fade over the first few years of life.

WHAT CAUSES DERMAL MELANOCYTOSIS?

Dermal melanocytosis is caused by skin color that is deeper in the skin. The deep skin color causes the skin to appear blue or gray.

The color in our skin is called melanin. The cells that make melanin are called melanocytes. Melanocytes usually live in the top layer of the skin.

Before a baby is born, melanocytes must travel from deep under the skin. Dermal melanocytosis happens when some melanocytes do not reach the top layer of the skin. Instead, they stay in a deeper layer of skin. This causes the skin to appear darker and more blue or gray.

Over time, the melanocytes can continue to travel upward. When this happens, the birthmark may fade.

WHO GETS DERMAL MELANOCYTOSIS?

Dermal melanocytosis is a very common birthmark. It is more common in babies with darker skin tones. It is less common in those with lighter skin tones.

HOW IS DERMAL MELANOCYTOSIS DIAGNOSED?

A doctor can usually diagnose dermal melanocytosis by looking at the skin.

HOW IS DERMAL MELANOCYTOSIS TREATED?

Treatment is usually not needed for dermal melanocytosis. Many of these birthmarks fade over time.



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