

Cherry Angiomas (Red Moles)

Cherry Angiomas: What They Are & Treatment Options

Cherry angiomas are **small, bright red to purple “spots” or bumps** made of tiny blood vessels near the surface of the skin. They are **benign (not cancer)** and extremely common—especially as we get older.



What do cherry angiomas look like?

Cherry angiomas can be:

- **Pinpoint to a few millimeters** (sometimes larger)
- **Flat or slightly raised**
- **Bright red, cherry-red, or purple**
- Found most often on the **trunk (chest/back/abdomen)**, but can appear anywhere

They may **bleed easily** if scratched, shaved over, or rubbed by clothing.

When a cherry angioma looks darker

Sometimes a cherry angioma can appear **dark red, purple, or even nearly black** if it's irritated or has clotted blood inside (“thrombosed”). If a spot **suddenly turns dark**, is **growing quickly**, or looks **very different from your other red spots**, it's smart to have it checked.

Why do cherry angiomas happen?

The exact cause isn't fully known, but cherry angiomas are commonly linked to:

- **Normal aging**
- **Genetics (family tendency)**
- **Hormonal changes** (sometimes)

They are **not caused by poor hygiene** and usually **not dangerous**.

Do cherry angiomas need treatment?

Usually, **no**—treatment is optional.

People choose removal when a spot:

- **Bleeds often**
 - Gets **caught on clothing/jewelry**
 - Is **cosmetically bothersome**
 - Looks **atypical**, and your clinician recommends removal/biopsy for reassurance
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Treatment options (in-office)

Your dermatologist may recommend:

1) Vascular laser

A laser targets the blood vessels, causing the angioma to fade.

- Often **minimal downtime**
- May take **1–2 treatments** (sometimes more for larger spots)

2) Electrocautery (tiny “touch” of heat)

A quick way to treat small raised angiomas.

- Can form a small **scab** for several days

3) Shave removal (sometimes with cautery)

Used if the lesion is raised, frequently bleeding, or needs confirmation under the microscope.

At-home removal methods aren't recommended—they can cause **infection, scarring, or significant bleeding**.

Pre-Op Instructions (Before Removal)

If you're monitoring only (no treatment)

No preparation needed—just mention any spots that are **new, changing, bleeding, or darkening**.

If you're having laser, cautery, or shave removal

- **Avoid tanning/sunburn** on the area for ~2 weeks (sunburned skin is harder to treat safely).
 - If you take **blood thinners** (including aspirin/NSAIDs), **do not stop them** unless your prescribing clinician says so. Tell your dermatology team ahead of time.
 - Arrive with clean skin: **no makeup, lotion, or self-tanner** on the area.
 - If you're prone to **cold sores** and treating near the lips, mention it (antiviral prevention may be recommended).
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Post-Op Instructions (After Removal)

What to expect

- **Laser:** mild redness/swelling; the spot may darken then fade.
- **Cautery/shave:** a small **scab** is common for ~5–10 days (varies by size and location).

Simple aftercare

1. **Gently cleanse** once daily with mild soap and water.
2. Apply a thin layer of **petrolatum (Vaseline/Aquaphor)** 1–2×/day until healed (unless your clinician instructs otherwise).
3. **Don't pick** scabs—this is the most common cause of scarring.
4. Avoid pools/hot tubs and heavy sweating for **24–48 hours** (or as directed).
5. **Sun protection is key:** use SPF 30+ and cover the area—sun can worsen dark marks while healing.

Call the office if you have:

- Bleeding that **doesn't stop** after 10–15 minutes of firm pressure
 - Increasing pain, warmth, spreading redness, pus, or fever
 - A wound that's not improving over several days
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Are cherry angiomas cancer?

Cherry angiomas are **benign** and not skin cancer. Still, any spot that is **new, changing, very dark, irregular, or bleeding frequently** should be evaluated to confirm the diagnosis.

Do cherry angiomas go away on their own?

Most persist once they appear. Some may fade slightly, but many remain stable.

Do they mean I have a health problem?

In most people, no. They're usually just a common skin change with age.

Why do I keep getting more?

Many people develop **more over time**, especially on the trunk. Genetics and aging play a role.

Do cherry angiomas bleed a lot?

They can bleed if nicked because they're made of blood vessels. Bleeding is usually controllable with **firm pressure**.

Is removal painful?

Most treatments feel like a quick "snap" (laser) or brief sting (cautery). Numbing is sometimes used for shave removal or sensitive areas.

Will removal leave a scar?

Most heal very well, but any procedure can leave a **small mark**, especially if the area is picked or doesn't heal well. Following aftercare and sun protection reduces risk.

Can I remove it at home?

Not recommended—there's a real risk of **bleeding, infection, and scarring**.