

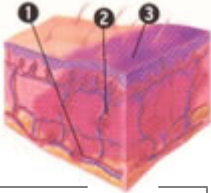
How to treat painful discolorations for speedier healing

By Jody Buffalo

Everyone gets bruises (caused by trauma to the skin) - which is why we turned to New York City plastic surgeon Michael Evan Sachs, M.D., for advice on how to treat these black-and-blue marks so they fade faster.

THE BASIC FACTS

A bruise is an area where blood has leaked out of a damaged **vessel** or **capillary** and pooled beneath the skin. The body typically stops the bleeding in about 30 seconds through **clot promoting platelets**, which clump together to repair the blood vessel wall - similar to plugging a hole. As the body reabsorbs the blood (usually over seven to 10 days), the bruise fades from black and-blue to green and then to yellow before disappearing.



BRUISED SKIN

1. leaking vessel
2. clot-promoting platelets
3. surface bruise

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Some people bruise more easily than others. Here's why:

- ▶ **You have type-0 blood**, which tends to bruise most easily (those with type-A blood typically bruise least), due to the makeup of the blood cells.

- ▶ **You have high blood pressure**, causing more blood to seep out of the broken vessel.

- ▶ **You take substances regularly that hinder your blood's ability to clot.** Aspirin, naproxen, ibuprofen, excess vitamin E (the recommended dietary allowance is 15 milligrams daily) and herbs such as ginkgo biloba and Saint Johns Wort all thin the blood.

- ▶ **You have a medical disorder.** Everything from deficiencies in nutrients like vitamins C and K to, in rare cases, leukemia can cause alarmingly frequent bruising.

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

You can help prevent or minimize bruises. Beauty Rx:

1. **If you're injured, apply direct pressure with ice immediately** to constrict the damaged blood vessels and minimize blood leakage.

2. **Elevate the injured body part higher than your heart.** Blood flows down from the heart, so elevation slows the flow of blood, allowing less of it to leak out.

3. **Eat a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables.** It will give your body the nutrients it needs for normal clotting.

4. **If you're scheduled for surgery, take steps to minimize bruising** by avoiding supplements and over-the-counter painkillers (see list above) other than acetaminophen, which has no effect on clotting, for two weeks prior to your procedure.

Bruises tend to show up more quickly and more frequently on those with lighter skin.



WHAT WORKS Although many people swear by the homeopathic remedy arnica to heal bruises, "it's best to stick to tried-and-true methods of bruise control, like icing the injured area and limiting intake of sub-

stances that thin the blood," says Michael Evan Sachs, M.D., founder of the American Society of Revisional Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery in New York City. "Your body shouldn't bruise without any trauma," he adds. "If you bruise from just walking around, go immediately to the doctor. And, while the dark spots might be unattractive, people who bruise easily from trauma are normal, healthy individuals. You actually don't want to avoid bruising (or clotting too much), as excess clotting can lead to heart attack or stroke later in life. So it's not always a bad thing to be an 'easy bruiser.'" Visit www.michaellevansachs.com