

# Aging and Our Skin: Bruises & Cuts

WITH AGE, OUR SKIN IS MORE LIKELY TO BRUISE BECAUSE TINY VEINS IN OUR SKIN BECOME LESS ELASTIC AND STURDY.

Bruises are the most common skin injury usually caused by a bump or fall. The actual injury is to the deeper tissues beneath your skin; a bruise appears when blood from the injured tissue gathers near your skin's surface. The bruised area may be tender for a day or two, but the pain usually goes away as the bruise color fades.

If you bruise easily, ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medications to see if bruising is a side effect. Medications and supplements that have been shown to increase bruising include:

- ◆ Aspirin
- ◆ Blood Thinners
- ◆ Ginseng
- ◆ Ginkgo Biloba
- ◆ Excess Vitamin E



## Home Treatment for Bruises:

- ◆ Do not massage your bruise.
- ◆ Apply ice or a cold pack in 15 minute intervals during the first 48 hours to help vessels get smaller and reduce swelling. The sooner you apply ice, the less bleeding and bruising there will be.
- ◆ Avoid taking aspirin to relieve pain, since aspirin slows blood clotting. Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) instead. Please note: Check with your doctor before stopping aspirin, if your doctor prescribed it for you.
- ◆ Elevate the bruised area, if possible. Elevation causes blood to leave the area and there will be less swelling.
- ◆ Apply heat with a warm towel, hot water bottle, or heating pad if the area is still painful after 48 hours.

## Consult Your Doctor If:

- ◆ You have a bruise that swells or is extremely painful, especially if you take blood-thinning medication.
- ◆ A bruise to a toe or finger results in a hemorrhage (collection of blood) under your toenail or fingernail.
- ◆ You notice that you're bruising easily or for no apparent reason.
- ◆ A bruise does not fade significantly within 10 days or fails to fade completely after three weeks.



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When you have a cut, stop the bleeding and determine whether or not stitches are needed. If the cut is bleeding heavily or spurting blood, apply direct pressure to stop the bleeding. You may have to apply pressure for 10 minutes or more for a bad cut.

Sometimes a cut needs stitches. As a rule, **stitches may be needed for:**

- ◆ Cuts more than 1/4" deep that have jagged edges or gape open
- ◆ Deep cuts on a joint: elbow knuckle, knee
- ◆ Deep cuts on the palm side of the hand or fingers
- ◆ Cuts on the face, eyelids, or lips
- ◆ Cuts that go down to the muscle or bone
- ◆ Cuts that continue to bleed after 15 minutes of direct pressure



## Home Treatment for Cuts:

- ◆ Rinse cut with cool water
- ◆ Wash around wound with soap and water. Avoid getting soap in wound.
- ◆ Use tweezers cleaned in alcohol to remove dirt, glass, or gravel that remains in wound.
- ◆ Apply pressure directly to wound with clean gauze pad until bleeding has stopped.
- ◆ Apply an antibiotic ointment and bandage to help prevent scarring and promote healing.
- ◆ Antiseptics such as hydrogen peroxide are not recommended. They can irritate the wound and cause further discomfort.
- ◆ Avoid taking aspirin to relieve pain, since aspirin slows blood clotting. Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) instead. Please note: Check with your doctor before stopping your aspirin if your doctor prescribed it for you.
- ◆ A tetanus booster shot is recommended every 10 years.



## Consult Your Doctor If:

- ◆ You have increased pain, swelling, redness or tenderness
- ◆ Heat or red streaks extending from the area
- ◆ Discharge of pus is in the wound
- ◆ You have a fever of 100 degrees or higher with no other cause.

"AGING AND OUR SKIN: BRUISES & CUTS" WRITTEN BY COURTNEY J. SCHOESSOW, MPH, APRIL 2002.

### REFERENCES FOR CUTS AND BRUISES:

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