



Bruises: Dr. Henry Shih

What are bruises?

Bruises happen when blood vessels under the skin break, but the skin isn't cut. Blood leaks into the tissues under the skin. Bruises start off red in color, and then turn blue or purple. As they heal, bruises can turn green and yellow. Most bruises heal in 1 to 2 weeks, but some take longer.

How are bruises treated?

A bruise will get better on its own. But to feel better and help your bruise heal, you can:

- Put a cold gel pack, bag of ice, or bag of frozen vegetables on the injured area every 1 to 2 hours, for 15 minutes each time. Put a thin towel between the ice (or other cold object) and your skin. Use the ice (or other cold object) for at least 6 hours after your injury. Some people find it helpful to ice longer, even up to 2 days after their injury.
- Raise the area, if possible – Raising the area above the level of your heart helps to reduce swelling.
- Take medicine to reduce the pain and swelling – To treat pain, you can take Tylenol. To treat pain and swelling, you can take ibuprofen (sample brand names: Advil, Motrin). But people who have certain conditions or take certain medicines should not take ibuprofen. If you are unsure, ask your doctor or nurse if you can take ibuprofen.

You should see a doctor if you get a fever, your joints swell, you cannot walk or move, you get bruises for no reason.

