

Health | September 5, 2017 | By Korin Miller

# How to Get Rid of a Black Eye

Read this before trying a random home remedy.



Mandy Moore is on the mend after colliding with a shower door handle. “Shower door handle-1, Mandy-0,” she recently wrote on Instagram next to a photo of herself with stitches and a shiner. “Real talk: how does a girl get rid of a black eye pronto? Any helpful hints (minus ice and arnica??)”

Moore’s comment section was flooded with a wide range of suggestions from fans. DIY remedies included pineapple, butter, aloe vera, using Theresienöl (an Austrian therapeutic oil), making a paste of honey and Epsom salts to use as an eye mask, and using a spoon to gently massage the area and help distribute the blood. Nearly everyone had a different remedy and most swore their method would clear Moore up in no time.



## **Black eyes are no fun, but they’re actually no different than any other bruise on your body.**

“A black eye is simply a bruise around the eye,” Jeffrey Walline, O.D., Ph.D., associate dean for research at the Ohio State University College of Optometry, tells SELF. “The difference between a black eye and a bruise on the arm is that it involves a very delicate organ.” The skin around your eyes is very thin, so any trauma is likely to cause blood vessels to burst and blood to leak out into the surrounding tissue, **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, tells SELF.

Your body actually goes through a similar mechanism when you, say, have blood drawn from your arm, but because your skin is thicker there, the bruising isn’t as obvious, Ronald Gentile, M.D., codirector of the ocular trauma service at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai, tells SELF. But black eyes don’t just happen when you get an injury to your immediate eye area—you can also get one when you hurt your nose. This happens because of the way blood accumulates in the face, Dr. Gentile explains. “If you develop bleeding under the skin in that area, it will migrate to the area around the eye and give you a black eye,” he says.

# Eventually a black eye will clear up on its own, but there are a few things you can do to try to speed up the healing process.

The first and probably most important is to ice the area as soon as you can after you're injured to reduce swelling and constrict blood vessels, suggests Luga Podesta, M.D., sports medicine physician and regenerative medicine specialist at Bluetail Medical Group in Naples, Florida. He recommends using ice or something cold on the area for about 15 minutes every few hours for the first day or two. (Dr. Walline says a bag of frozen peas works just fine, BTW; then, after a few days, use a warm compress to increase blood flow and healing.)

Just like any bruise, a black eye will heal on its own, so it can be tough to say what does and doesn't help speed up the process, Dr. Gentile points out. Still there are some things that are believed to help, and some have more scientific backup than others.

One is arnica (which Moore mentioned), an herbal salve or lotion that can be applied to your skin, Dr. Goldenberg says. Arnica may help relax your blood vessels, allowing blood to be reabsorbed back into the body. Another option is topical vitamin K, which promotes blood clotting and may also help speed things along, Joshua Zeichner, M.D., a New York City-based board-certified dermatologist, tells SELF. A small study published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* found that vitamin K cream reduced the severity of bruising that people experienced after undergoing a laser skin treatment. The study only included 22 people, but it was a double-blind randomized placebo-controlled study, which is promising. Finally, if you visit a dermatologist, they can use a vascular laser to stimulate blood flow and cause your bruising to heal faster, Dr. Goldenberg says.

As for recommendations like butter, aloe vera, and Theresienöl, Dr. Zeichner says it's unlikely they do anything other than moisturize the area. Unfortunately, antibiotic creams like Neosporin won't help, either. "These don't work after blunt injuries that cause bruising and should not be applied unless there is a break in the skin," Dr. Goldenberg says.

Again, your body is going to heal the black eye over time regardless, so don't stress out if you don't have easy access to arnica or vitamin K. But, if you're experiencing muscle pain, blurred or double vision, or have difficulty moving your eye, Dr. Podesta says it's time to call your doctor for an evaluation.