

# Health

## Everyone's Talking About Mitch McConnell's Discolored Hand—Here Are 10 Things That Can Cause Discoloration

Photos of Mitch McConnell have been circulating online that show the Senate Majority Leader with an extremely bruised hand. And naturally, people have thoughts.

By **Korin Miller** | October 23, 2020

Social media has been flooded with photos of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's hands. In one photo, one of McConnell's hands appears to be black and blue, with a Band-Aid around his thumb; the other hand has a bandage on the back. Now reporters—and social media—want to know what's wrong. The 78-year-old has survived polio, heart bypass surgery, and a fractured shoulder throughout his lifetime—could his health be ailing again, they wonder?

For the record, McConnell has not publicly disclosed a health issue. When asked about his health on Thursday, McConnell told reporters that there were "no concerns," per *CNN*. And, when he was asked if he had any health issues people should know about, he replied, "of course not." McConnell did not respond when he was asked if he is being treated by a doctor.

Still, it's only natural to have questions about what, exactly, could cause a person's hand to appear black and blue. Naturally, people on Twitter started investigating:



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What is going on with his hands?!



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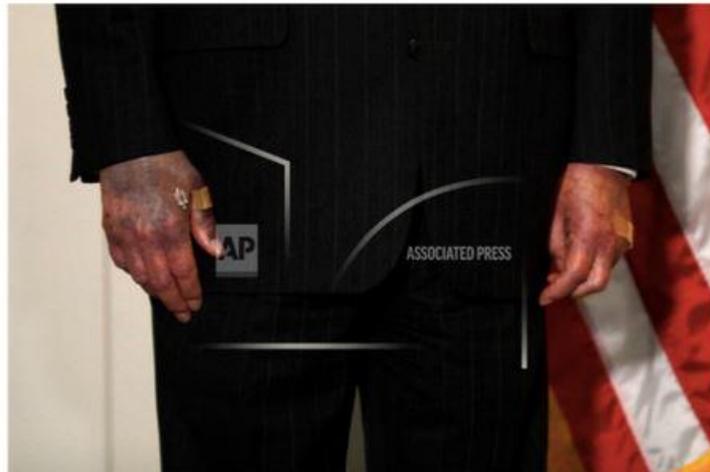


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Uhhhhh look at this picture of Mitch McConnell's hands that @lizzyratner found on AP

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While no one can confirm the actual cause of McConnell's bruising other than his medical team, here are 10 potential causes of discolored hands.

## An injury

Having any kind of injury, like a cut or other accident, can cause bruising. Bruises form when blood pools under the skin after an injury, the Cleveland Clinic explains. They typically start out as black and blue, brownish or purple, and may change color as they fade. Older people are more prone to bruising, the Cleveland Clinic says.

There are many reasons why someone might develop a bruise, including from something as simple as bumping into an object. "The most common reason for bruising is injury," **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, tells *Health*. "This can be in many forms in different patients."

## Recent blood work

Having an IV or blood draw can also cause bruising, Dr. Goldenberg says. And, in general, people tend to have more bruising after something like this as they age. "In older patients, the most innocuous trauma can cause bruising," Dr. Goldenberg says. "This is due to the skin thinning with age."

## Poor blood flow

There can be multiple reasons why someone might have poor blood flow, ranging from being exposed to the cold to having lung or vascular disease, Lewis Nelson, M.D., chair of the department of emergency medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, tells *Health*. But that can lead to easy bruising.

## Low oxygen levels

Among other things, blood cells help to carry oxygen to various parts of the body. But, if those blood cells don't have as much oxygen as they should, they can cause cyanosis, or a bluish tint, to the skin, Dr. Nelson says.

## Cancer

Cancer treatments, including chemotherapy and targeted therapy, can increase the risk of bruising and bleeding, according to the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Certain treatments can lower the number of platelets (the cells that help your blood to clot and stop bleeding) in the blood. When your platelet count is low, you may bruise or bleed a lot or very easily, in a condition known as thrombocytopenia, the NCI says.

## Liver disease

Cirrhosis is a condition where the liver is scarred and permanently damaged, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). With cirrhosis, scar tissue replaces healthy liver tissue and prevents your liver from working normally. As liver function gets worse, a person may experience easy bruising and bleeding, the NIDDK says.

## Sepsis

Sepsis is a life-threatening complication of an infection. Without treatment, sepsis can cause tissue damage and multiple organ failure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). People with sepsis tend to develop a cluster of tiny blood spots that look like skin pricks, Johns Hopkins Medicine says. If sepsis goes untreated, those pricks get bigger and look like fresh bruises.

## Broken blood vessels

Blood vessels can break, leading to bleeding into the skin, according to Medline Plus. This can cause tiny red or purple dots to form called petechiae. Blood can also collect under the skin in larger, flat areas, leading to the appearance of bruising, Dr. Goldenberg says.

## Raynaud's disease

Raynaud's disease is a rare blood disorder that usually happens in the fingers and toes, per Medline Plus. The condition causes the blood vessels to narrow when you feel cold or stressed. And, when this happens, blood can't get to the surface of the skin. As a result, the area turns blue or white.

## Endocarditis

This rare heart condition is an inflammation of the inside lining of the heart chambers and heart valves, Medline Plus explains. It's usually caused by a bacterial infection, but may be caused by a fungal infection in some cases. Symptoms of endocarditis can range from flu-like symptoms to swelling in the legs, feet, or abdomen, but the Mayo Clinic says symptoms can also include petechiae. Petechiae can look like "regular" bruises, Dr. Goldenberg says.