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7 Surprising Reasons You Bruise So Easily, According to Doctors

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Waking up in the morning with a bruise you don't remember getting is not unusual. But if this starts to happen more and more, or if you develop purple and blue patches from seemingly minor bumps, there may be other reasons you bruise easily at play.

"A bruise is a reflection of minor injury to the blood vessels under the surface of the skin. If these vessels are damaged, a small amount of blood can leak out, giving the classic blue, black, or purple discoloration," said [Cory Fisher, D.O.](#), a family medicine physician at the Cleveland Clinic.

Meet the experts: [Cory Fisher, D.O.](#), a family medicine physician at the Cleveland Clinic; [Gary Goldenberg, M.D.](#), an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City.

If you're getting bruises from incidents that feel less than minor, or they seem to be coming from nowhere at all, one of these reasons for bruising easily may be to blame.

Reasons you bruise so easily

Your skin is aging

Easy bruising is “incredibly common in the 60+ population,” said [Gary Goldenberg, M.D.](#), an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. “It takes a lot less trauma to create a bruise than it ever did before in your life.”

Why? “Skin gets thinner as you age, and blood vessels get more friable,” both of which make you more prone to bruising easily, said Dr. Fisher. “With thinning skin, you lose fat and collagen that previously protected your blood vessels. And your blood vessels also lose elasticity, making them more prone to break.”

You’re on blood thinners for a cardiovascular condition.

If you’re on a blood-thinning medication to treat heart arrhythmia or [blood clots](#), that’s a simple explanation for unexplained bruising, said Dr. Fisher. Commonly prescribed blood thinners include Warfarin, Eliquis, Xarelto, and Pradaxa. But you may also be taking other drugs that have a blood-thinning effect without even realizing it, like ibuprofen or aspirin. These reduce your blood’s ability to clot properly, so bleeding due to capillary (blood vessel) damage may go on for longer than usual, allowing blood to leak and form a bruise.

You take one of these herbal supplements.

Per research in the [EPMA Journal](#), the following herbal supplements interfere in different ways with the blood’s ability to clot, which may contribute to more unexplained bruises: aloe, cranberry, feverfew, garlic, ginger, ginkgo, turmeric, chamomile, fenugreek, red clover, evening primrose, ginseng, grapefruit, green tea, oregano, saw palmetto, and flaxseed. This is a good reminder to talk to your doctor before you take *any* supplement for any reason—not only may they interact with other meds you’ve been prescribed, but they also aren’t FDA-regulated, so you may not be swallowing exactly what you expect.

You have a bleeding disorder.

[Hemophilia](#) and von Willebrand disease are both blood disorders that can cause easy bruising, said Dr. Fisher. Hemophilia is a rare condition that affects the blood's ability to clot, putting someone at risk for severe bleeding from just a slight injury. Von Willebrand disease is a milder and somewhat more common clotting disorder often characterized by bleeding during dental work, long-lasting nosebleeds, blood in urine or stool, and heavy periods.

You're experiencing side effects from antidepressants.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (a.k.a. SSRIs) are a common class of antidepressants that have impacts beyond the brain. "SSRIs, like fluoxetine, sertraline, citalopram, and bupropion, can interact with platelets, which are an important part of the clotting process," said Dr. Fisher. While a recent review in [Clinical and Translational Science](#) failed to find a direct effect on blood clotting from SSRIs, if you are taking one along with another medication on this list, or if you're over 60, it may be worth bringing up with your physician.

You're applying corticosteroids regularly.

Corticosteroids—topical or systemic medications used to treat various health conditions—may make you bruise easily because they can cause the skin to become thinner. According to the [National Eczema Society](#), using topical corticosteroids over long periods of time may make the skin appear transparent, fragile, and more susceptible to bruising. These drugs are often used to relieve swelling, redness, itching, and other allergic-type symptoms. Most commonly, topical corticosteroids are [prescribed](#) for skin conditions like [eczema](#) and [psoriasis](#), while oral corticosteroids may be recommended for things like asthma, allergies, and other inflammatory conditions.

You have a vitamin or mineral deficiency.

Deficiencies in vitamins C and K may cause unexplained bruising—but if you live in a developed nation and have regular access to healthy food,

then it's highly unlikely this one applies to you. These deficiencies typically occur only in severely undernourished populations, explained Dr. Fisher.

[Vitamin C](#), in particular, plays a [key role in wound healing](#) and the production of collagen, an important structural component of skin. Without enough of it, your blood vessels are out in the open and more likely to rupture.

[Iron deficiency anemia](#) is more common, affecting [15% of American adults](#), and it can also cause easy bruising. While it is rare, some people with iron deficiency anemia also experience reduced production of platelets, which are the cells in your blood that help stop bleeding. Without enough platelets, bleeding is slower to stop, which can result in more bruises. Other symptoms of iron deficiency, per the [Cleveland Clinic](#), include pale skin, shortness of breath, chills, odd food cravings, and brittle nails.

Can you get rid of a bruise fast?

Unfortunately, no. It can take up to two weeks for a bruise to heal, and there's not a whole lot you can do to make them disappear faster. "As the body absorbs this lost blood, it goes through a few phases. After just a few days, the blue/black/purple discoloration and any swelling will typically improve, and the color changes to green or yellow," said Dr. Fischer. "It may then look light brown before healing completely."

You can speed healing, however, if you take action right after you've thwacked your knee or bumped your elbow. Grab an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas and hold it on the affected area for 10 minutes a few times a day. This will constrict the blood vessels, in turn slowing the spread of the purple discoloration in the first place.

And if your bruises seem to be especially gnarly? See your doctor, especially if they are prolonged, very painful, limit movement, come on suddenly, or occur frequently. Developing a severe, swollen bruise after having surgery should also warrant an appointment ASAP.

This article was medically reviewed by Mona Gohara, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and member of the [Prevention Medical Review Board](#) on July 11, 2019

We've all been there—a shin to a coffee table or a trip on the sidewalk can leave you with a black-and-blue or two. But what is a bruise, exactly? “A bruise is a reflection of minor injury to the blood vessels under the surface of the skin. If these vessels are damaged, a small amount of blood can leak out, giving the classic blue, black, or purple discoloration,” says [Cory Fisher, DO](#), family medicine physician at the Cleveland Clinic.

But what if you seem to be bruising easily, developing bruises on your legs, arms, and other parts of your body from even just a slight bump, or seemingly out of nowhere? Should you be worried? Keep reading to find out what could be causing your unexplained bruising—and how to heal a bruise faster.
