

7 Surprising Reasons You Bruise So Easily, According to Doctors



Prevention

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You and certain fruits—strawberries, [bananas](#), peaches—have one major thing in common: You're easy to bruise. If you're constantly finding new patches of purple and blue on your arms and legs, it's only natural to wonder where they came from. There's not just one cause, though: Reasons for bruising span from medication side effects to nutritional deficiencies, so pinpointing the cause of yours may be tricky.

A bruise is a reflection of a minor injury to the blood vessels under the skin, explains [Cory Fisher, D.O.](#), a family medicine physician at the Cleveland Clinic. The injury causes a small amount of blood to leak out and create the classic blue, black, or purple discolorations.

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.

Below, Dr. Fisher and a dermatologist break down all the possible reasons you find yourself unexpectedly covered in sore spots, and what you can do about them.

Reasons you bruise so easily

You're getting older.

Easy bruising is "incredibly common in the 60-plus population," says [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 with age, and blood vessels get more fragile, both of which make you more prone to bruising, Dr. Fisher explains. "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," he adds.

You're on blood thinners for a heart condition.

If you're on a blood-thinning medication to treat a heart arrhythmia or [blood clots](#), that can be a simple explanation for unexplained bruising, says 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 blood vessel damage may go on for longer than usual, allowing blood to leak and form a bruise.

You take an herbal supplement.

According to research in the [EPMA Journal](#), some herbal supplements interfere with the blood's ability to clot in different ways, which may contribute to more unexplained bruises. Those include 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, as they could interact with your prescriptions or have unexpected side effects.

You have a bleeding disorder.

[Hemophilia](#) and von Willebrand disease are both blood disorders that can cause easy bruising, says Dr. Fisher. Hemophilia is a rare condition that affects the blood's ability to clot, which can lead to severe bleeding from even 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 effects beyond the brain. "SSRIs, like fluoxetine, sertraline, citalopram, and bupropion, can interact with platelets, which are an important part of the clotting process," says 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 taking corticosteroids regularly.

Corticosteroids—topical or systemic anti-inflammatories used to treat various health conditions—may make you bruise easily because they can thin skin over time. 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. Topically, these drugs are used to relieve swelling, redness, and itching caused by 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—vitamins found in many fruits and vegetables—may cause unexplained bruising. However, those deficiencies are uncommon in the United States and other developed countries where most people have access to a balanced diet, Dr. Fisher explains.

[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 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 include pale skin, shortness of breath, chills, odd food cravings, and brittle nails.

Can you get rid of a bruise fast?

Unfortunately, no, there's not one simple trick to fix an existing bruise fast. 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 fade any quicker. "As the body absorbs lost blood, it goes through a few phases. After just a few days, the blue, black, or purple discoloration and any swelling will typically improve, and the color changes to green or yellow," says Dr. Fisher. "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, according to the [Mayo Clinic](#). Grab an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas and hold it on the affected area for 20 minutes a few times a day for the first day or two after the injury. This will constrict the blood vessels, in turn slowing the initial spread of the purple discoloration.

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.

Dietary supplements are products intended to supplement the diet. They are not medicines and are not intended to treat, diagnose, mitigate, prevent, or cure diseases. Be cautious about taking dietary supplements if you are pregnant or nursing. Also, be careful about giving supplements to a child, unless recommended by their healthcare provider.