



**KAISER PERMANENTE®**

## Bruises

A bruise, or contusion, is an injury that occurs when small blood vessels under the skin are ruptured. The rupture causes swelling and a discoloration of the skin without necessarily having a break in the overlying skin. Bruises are usually caused by a bump, blow, or fall, but some people get bruises at the clinic when blood is drawn through a syringe. When the blood vessels rupture, blood moves into the surrounding tissues and causes the black and blue colors of a bruise. A good example is a black eye, which is a kind of bruise. Some people bruise more easily than others, especially people who take aspirin or blood thinners—also known as anticoagulants.

To reduce the bleeding and discoloration of a bruise, apply ice or cold packs to the area for 15 minutes at a time, several times a day, during the first 48 hours. Also, keep the bruised area elevated to decrease swelling, and rest the area so that it doesn't get injured again. If the bruise is still painful after 48 hours, apply warm towels, a heating pad, or a hot water bottle.

You should call your health care professional if signs of infection develop around a bruise site. These signs include:

- increased pain and tenderness;
- heat or red streaks extending away from the area;
- pus forming in the tissues; or
- a fever of 100 degrees or higher.

You should also call if a blow to your eye causes:

- double vision or difficulty seeing;
- severe pain in the eyeball;
- an inability to move the eye normally in all directions;
- serious bleeding in the white of the eye; or
- any blood in the colored part of the eye.

Finally, call if you suddenly start bruising easily or if you start getting multiple bruises for no apparent reason.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at [www.kaiserpermanente.org/california](http://www.kaiserpermanente.org/california), then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION