

Easy Bruising and Bleeding

Are bruising and bleeding normal?

Everyone will get a bruise or have bleeding at some point. Bruises result from blood under the skin after an injury. Bruises are common on areas such as the arms and legs. People often bruise more easily as they get older. Bleeding happens when blood vessels are broken because of an injury, but it can also be a normal part of life. For example, women bleed during their period. Some women naturally have heavier periods than others.

Why do I bruise or bleed easily?

Some medicines can cause easy bruising and bleeding. Examples are aspirin, pain medicines like ibuprofen (Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve), and blood thinners. If you take one of these medicines, talk to your doctor to see if you should keep taking the medicine. Don't stop taking any medicine without talking to your doctor first. You should also tell your doctor about any over-the-counter medicines or supplements you take.

Problems with bruising and bleeding are often inherited and show up early in life. Bruising and bleeding can also be signs of poor nutrition, liver disease, and some cancers, but these are rare.

How do I know if I have one of these problems?

Talk to your doctor if you have:

- Large or frequent bruises that you can't remember getting
- Bleeding that doesn't stop after 10 minutes
- More than five nosebleeds in a year
- Periods that last more than seven days or periods so heavy you have to change your pad more than every two hours
- Family members who also have problems with bruising or bleeding

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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