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Taking Care of Bruises: For People Taking Blood Thinners

What can I do to take care of my bruises at home?

Bruising is common in patients taking blood thinners. Most of the time, bruising is not an emergency situation and can be treated at home by following these steps:

1. Rest and protect the bruised area.
2. Ice will reduce pain and swelling. Apply ice or cold packs immediately to prevent or minimize swelling. Apply the ice or cold pack for 10 to 20 minutes, 3 or more times a day.

- For the first 48 hours after an injury, avoid things that might increase swelling, such as hot showers, hot tubs, hot packs, or alcoholic beverages.



- After 48 to 72 hours, if swelling is gone, apply heat and begin gentle exercise with the aid of moist heat to help restore and maintain flexibility. Some experts recommend alternating between hot and cold treatments.
3. Elevate the bruised area on pillows while applying ice and anytime you are sitting or lying down. Try to keep the area at or above the level of your heart to help minimize swelling.

- Gently massage or rub the area to relieve pain and encourage blood flow.

Do not massage the bruised area if it causes pain.



When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if any of the following occur during home treatment:

- A bruise that lasts longer than two weeks
- Signs of skin infection developing, such as
 - ◇ increased pain
 - ◇ swelling
 - ◇ warmth
 - ◇ redness around the area
 - ◇ red streaks leading from the area
 - ◇ pus and a fever
- Symptoms that become more severe or frequent
- New symptoms develop

When should I call my anticoagulation provider?

It is important to contact your anticoagulation provider about your bruising, especially if the bruising is new or more significant than usual. He or she may want to do a blood test or find out if there have been any other changes in your health.