

Easy bruising: Common as you age from MayoClinic.com



Yet another bruise. What caused that dark, unsightly mark on your leg? You don't recall bumping into anything lately; however, you seem to be bruising frequently. Is this cause for concern?

Easy bruising is common with age. Although most bruises are harmless and go away without treatment, easy bruising can sometimes be a sign of a more serious problem.

Most bruises form when small blood vessels (capillaries) near the skin's surface are broken by the impact of a blow or injury — often on the arms or legs. When this happens, blood leaks out of the vessels and initially appears as a bright or dark red, purple or black mark. Eventually your body reabsorbs the blood, and the mark disappears.

Some people — especially women — are more prone to bruising than are others.

As you get older, several factors can contribute to easy bruising, including:

- **Aging capillaries** - Over time, the tissues supporting these vessels weaken, and capillary walls become more fragile and prone to rupture.
- **Thinning skin** - With age, your skin becomes thinner and loses some of the protective fatty layer that helps cushion your blood vessels from injury. Excessive exposure to the sun accelerates this process.
- **Certain medications or supplements** can contribute to easy bruising -- blood-thinning medications (i.e. aspirin, warfarin/Coumadin, Plavix) reduce your blood's ability to clot; topical and systemic corticosteroids (often used to treat various conditions such as allergies, asthma, and eczema) cause your skin to thin; certain dietary supplements, such as fish oil and ginkgo, can increase your bruising risk due to their blood-thinning effect.

Don't stop taking your medications if you experience increased bruising. Consult your doctor about your concerns. In addition, make sure your doctor is aware of any supplements you're taking — especially if you're taking them while on a blood-thinning drug. Your doctor might recommend avoiding certain over-the-counter medications or supplements.

To prevent minor bruising, eliminate household clutter that could cause bumps or falls. Long-sleeved shirts and pants can provide an extra layer of protection for your skin. Limit prolonged exposure to the sun to help you avoid its aging effects and a resulting increased risk of bruising.

You might not be able to eliminate easy bruising. However, taking simple steps to protect your skin and avoid injury can go a long way toward keeping you bruise-free.

Easy bruising sometimes indicates a serious underlying condition, such as a blood-clotting problem or a blood disease.

Consult your doctor if you:

- Have unusually large or painful bruises, especially if they seem to develop for no known reason
- Have easy bruising and abnormal bleeding elsewhere, such as from your nose, gums or intestinal tract
- Suddenly begin bruising, especially if you recently started taking a new medication
- Develop bruising during an illness in addition to fever or confusion

For Longevity, Every 15 Minutes of Exercise Counts

According to the World Health Organization, physical inactivity is the world's fourth leading risk factor for mortality. WHO, along with the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, recommends 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, along with strength training, for most people.

In a study of more than 400,000 people (over an average of 8 years), participants were asked to report their levels of weekly physical activity for the previous month by time and intensity.

The findings indicated that the people who exercised for 15 minutes a day, or 92 minutes per week, extended their expected lifespan by three years compared to people who were inactive. Those exercising for 30 minutes daily added about four years to life expectancy.

"The benefits of exercise appear to be significant even without reaching the recommended 150 minutes per week based on results of previous research," commented senior study author Xifeng Wu, MD, PhD, professor and chair of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Department of Epidemiology.

Bottom Line: Every little bit counts!

Source: *The Lancet (medical journal)*, 378(9798): 1244-1253; (October 1, 2011)

Winter Squash: Vegetable of the Month for December

Spaghetti squash is an oval-shaped yellow squash; also called the vegetable spaghetti. It averages 9 inches in length and may weigh 2 to 3 pounds. When cooked, the crisp, tender, spaghetti-like strands yield a mild lightly sweet and fresh taste. Keep in mind that the larger the vegetable, the thicker the strands and the more flavorful the taste.

Looking for a lighter meal among all the holiday fare? Here is a suggestion...

Spaghetti Squash and Roasted Veggies

Cut 1 spaghetti squash lengthwise and place in microwave-safe baking dish, cut-side down. Add ¼ cup of water and cook in microwave about 20 minutes until fork-tender. Allow to cool enough to handle.

Cut your favorite veggies into bite size pieces and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with dried oregano, basil, black pepper and pinch of kosher salt and toss until veggies are well coated. Spread onto rimmed baking sheet in single layer and bake at 350° for 30-35 minutes.

While veggies are cooking, scoop seeds out of spaghetti squash (discard); with a fork, scrape flesh into strands and place in serving bowl.

Toss spaghetti squash with roasted vegetables, sprinkle with parmesan cheese, and enjoy!

Suggestions: add toasted pine nuts; choose colorful and flavorful vegetables to roast such as red and green pepper, garlic, red onion, butternut squash, cherry or grape tomatoes (halved), carrots, mushrooms, broccoli; add chicken sausage.



Your Kitchen Sponge – The dirtiest thing in the kitchen and difficult to keep clean

Why are sponges so dirty?

- They come in contact with food residues that can build up in them.
- Sponges are often wet and are left in damp areas in or near the sink – ideal conditions for germs to multiply.
- Their many nooks and crannies can be great places for germs to grow.

A safe kitchen is a dry kitchen where there are no wet sponges and no wet towels for bacteria to grow overnight.

What to do:

- Microwave your wet sponge for 1 minute to get rid of a significant portion of the bacteria
- Running sponges through the dishwasher kills almost as many bugs as the microwave.
- If you cannot microwave or run dishwasher every day, use dish cloths on your kitchen surfaces; start with a fresh one each morning and toss into the hamper each night.

CAUTION: Do NOT microwave sponges that have metal in them AND make sure the sponge is wet so it does not catch fire.

Source: *Nutrition Action Healthletter - November 2011*

