



BRUISING HANDS AND ARMS

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Bruising on the back of the hands and arms is common. Dermatologists call it 'actinic purpura', 'solar purpura' or 'Bateman's purpura'. These flat blotches start out red, then turn purple, darken a bit further and eventually fade. They differ from normal bruises in several ways. First, usually there wasn't much of a knock or injury to cause them. Second, they are not tender. Finally, they last longer than normal bruises, often a few weeks.

These usually occur on the back of the hands and the forearms. The skin is sun-damaged, thin and wrinkly, almost flimsy looking. Mostly seen in older individuals, actinic purpura is due to the weakened state of blood vessel walls from many years of sun exposure. Blood thinners, including aspirin, coumadin, and alcohol all may worsen the condition. Steroids, either as a cream, pill or inhaled for lung disease, can also bring the condition on.

Treatment for this bruising is difficult. If a blood thinning medication is being taken, one can talk to their physician to see if it is safe to lower the dose. Daily application of an alpha-hydroxy acid cream, or **tretinoin cream** will increase skin thickness and may help a small amount. Cosmetics can be used to camouflage the lesions.

Finally, prevention of trauma to the skin is an excellent way to keep the bruising from coming in the first place. This is easily accomplished by wearing protective sleeves when in a situation when arm protection is needed. Protective sleeves can be ordered over the internet.

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