

# BRUISING

Although we hope that no donor will have any ill effects from giving blood, occasionally bruising of the arm may develop. Some donors may be concerned, especially if it is unexpected. We hope this will help explain why bruising occurs.

## What is bruising?

Bruising is caused by bleeding under the skin. For example, a hard knock that does not break the skin can damage fragile blood vessels that lie just beneath. These damaged blood vessels leak a small amount of blood, which collects in the area as a bruise. With time, the familiar blue-black discoloration changes to yellow and can move up and down the arm but eventually fades and disappears.

## Why can bruising happen after blood donation?

When the needle is taken out of the arm, bleeding will continue until the small hole in the vein closes up. The way to prevent this is to apply pressure to the arm over the site where the needle was inserted. This must continue until all signs of bleeding have stopped. Failure to maintain this pressure is the most common cause of bruising.

Second, when the donation needle is put into the arm, damage to the opposite wall of the vein may occur, causing a small hole through which blood can escape. This may not become apparent until after the donation.

Third, there are tiny fragile blood vessels running just under the skin, as well as the larger veins from which a blood donation is obtained. When the donation needle is inserted into the arm, one of these small vessels may be damaged. It is impossible to predict this as such vessels are not usually visible.

## What can be done?

Our trained staff take all possible measures to prevent bruising from occurring during or after donation. The single most important measure to prevent bruising is to apply pressure and a suitable dressing where the needle was inserted. The dressing should be kept on for at least 6 hours.

If a bruise occurs during the donation, trained personnel will assess the situation and may discontinue the donation. This will prevent the bruise from worsening.

If you are wearing a tight sleeve, we may ask you to remove that article of clothing. A tight sleeve can act as a tourniquet and cause congestion in the vein and promote bruising.

## What can you do?

Bruising may be painful. You should avoid heavy lifting that may aggravate the pain in the arm. However, gentle movement may be beneficial. Bruising can look very unsightly, but is usually harmless and will disperse with time.

You may also want to put some ice in a plastic bag and place it over your bandage for 10 minutes on and 10 minutes off. But don't put ice on your bare skin.

## If you experience any of the following, you should seek further help:

- Severe pain
- Numbness or pins and needles in the arm, hand or fingers
- Swelling and/or redness of the arm

## If problems persist you can get advice by calling:

In Manhattan, **646-812-9080**

In Queens, Nassau & Suffolk, **516-478-5030**

In New Jersey, **732-220-7026**

In the Bronx & Hudson Valley, **914-784-4623**

In Brooklyn & Staten Island, **718-797-7800**