



Bruises

(Contusions)

Patient and Family Education

What is a bruise or contusion?

A bruise or contusion is an injury to the soft tissues under the skin. This allows the red blood cells to collect under the skin, causing changes in skin color.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of these symptoms:

- Changes in skin color (color will vary over time)
- Pain
- Swelling

What is the treatment?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific treatment for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Rest the involved areas.
- If it comforts your child, apply ice to the area 3 times per day.
 - Each time put ice on for 20 minutes and off for 10 minutes during the first 12 to 24 hours after injury to reduce swelling.
 - Always wrap the ice pack with a towel or cloth to protect your child's skin.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol[®], or less costly store brand) may be given for pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give.
 - Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
 - Do not give acetaminophen to babies less than 3 months of age without a doctor's order.
- **Do not use aspirin or ibuprofen (Motrin[®], Advil[®] or less costly store brands).**
- Raise the injured area above the heart to reduce swelling.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if:

- Pain continues after three days of treatment
- Pain does not allow him to use the involved body part
- More bruises appear without a reason
- Swelling increases

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.