Bruise, Contusion, Hematoma

A bruise (*contusion*) or hematoma is a collection of blood under skin causing an area of discoloration. It is caused by an injury to blood vessels beneath the injured area with a release of blood into that area. As blood accumulates it is known as a hematoma. This collection of blood causes a blue to dark blue color. As the injury improves over days to weeks it turns to a yellowish color and then usually disappears completely over the same period of time. These generally resolve completely without problems. The hematoma rarely requires drainage.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply ice to the injured area for 20 minutes four times per day for the first 1 or 2 days.
- Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin. Discontinue the ice if it causes pain.
- If bleeding is more than just a little, apply pressure to the area for at least thirty minutes to decrease the amount of bruising. Apply pressure and ice as your caregiver suggests.
- If the injury is on an extremity, elevation of that part may help to decrease pain and swelling. Wrapping with an ace or supportive wrap may also be helpful. If the bruise is on a lower extremity and is painful, crutches may be helpful for a couple days.
- If you have been given a tetanus shot because the skin was broken, your arm may get swollen, red and warm to touch at the shot site. This is a normal response to the medicine in the shot. If you did not receive a tetanus shot today because you did not recall when your last one was given, make sure to check with your caregiver's office and determine if one is needed. Generally for a “dirty” wound, you should receive a tetanus booster if you have not had one in the last five years. If you have a “clean” wound, you should receive a tetanus booster if you have not had one within the last ten years.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have pain not controlled with over the counter medications. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. Do not use aspirin as it may cause bleeding.
- You develop increasing pain or swelling in the area of injury.
- An oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests.
- You develop any problems which seem worse than the problems which brought you in.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop severe pain in the area of the bruise out of proportion to the initial injury.
- The bruised area becomes red, tender, and swollen.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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