

Blood Collection: What to Expect

When a healthcare professional draws blood, they insert a small, hollow needle through the skin to access a vein. This procedure temporarily damages the blood vessel wall and the outermost layer of skin.

Recovering After a Blood Draw

- A bruise may appear to spread out in shape and size as it heals. Over time, it may change color from blue-black to green and then to yellow before fading.
- To relieve any discomfort, a person can try:
 - Taking pain relievers: A person can take acetaminophen, but they should avoid ibuprofen and aspirin for 24 hours after the blood draw.
 - Applying a cold compress: A cold compress may help relieve pain.
 - Remaining hydrated: Drinking plenty of water and eating a small snack after a blood draw can help a person maintain their energy.

Bruising

- Bruising occurs when blood from the damaged vein leaks out and settles under the skin.
- Some people may bruise more easily than others.
- Some causes of easy bruising include:
 - a history of excessive alcohol consumption and liver damage
 - taking certain medications, including antiplatelet agents, anticoagulants, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen
 - a vitamin C deficiency
 - a vitamin K deficiency
 - some medical conditions

Steps to Reduce Bruising

- Apply pressure: Apply firm pressure to the puncture site after the removal of the needle and keep the protective bandage on for at least 30 minutes afterward.
- Avoid strenuous activity: A person should not lift heavy objects immediately after a blood draw.
- Refrain from wearing tight clothing: Tight clothing may prevent the blood from circulating and place extra pressure on the veins, leading to a larger bruise.
- Apply a cold compress: Doing this may reduce discomfort.

When to Contact Your Primary Care Physician

- Bruising after a blood draw typically heals quickly. However, if the bruise is large, it may take 2–3 weeks to fade and disappear.
- A person should call their doctor if they experience any of the following symptoms:
 - the hand becoming discolored
 - numbness or tingling in the arm or hand that does not go away within a few hours
 - worsening redness and inflammation at the puncture site
 - severe pain at the puncture site
 - swelling that worsens instead of improving
 - inability to move or use arm (decreased range of motion)
 - If a person is unsure whether their symptoms are typical, they should call their doctor