



Bruising

Advice for
donors

Bruising is a recognised complication of giving blood, caused by blood leaking out of blood vessels and into the surrounding tissue.

For most affected blood donors, bruising is not serious and clears up over a few days. However, sometimes donors can get larger bruises that spread or appear down the arm. These bruises can be painful and look very alarming, but usually clear up without any problems.



Preventing bruising

- Blood donation should not be painful, so always tell your donor carer if your arm is sore or uncomfortable during the donation. If the pain continues or bruising is suspected, the donation will be stopped.
- For all donations, press firmly on the puncture site once the needle has been taken out. This stops any blood leaking out of the vein and encourages a clot to form. Your donor carer will advise you to press (not dab) for several minutes until any bleeding has stopped.
- Avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for the rest of the day.

What to do if you develop a bruise after the session

- Press firmly at the place the needle went in if you think the vein is still bleeding.
- Use a cold compress on the bruise. Always wrap anything frozen (eg. a pack of frozen vegetables or an ice pack) in a cloth before placing it on your skin, and don't keep it on your skin for more than a few minutes.
- If possible, when resting, raise your arm on a pillow or a cushion
- Avoid using your arm for heavy lifting or strenuous exercises. Light, gentle movement is okay; don't keep your arm too stiff.
- After 36 hours you can return to normal activity as long as it is comfortable to do so.

Other advice

If your bruise is painful, you can take paracetamol (according to the instructions on



the packet). Avoid aspirin, ibuprofen or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for the first 24 hours. These drugs may make bruising worse.

When to seek help

Contact our Donor Care Line on 0345 90 90 999 if:

- you feel a lump developing in your arm.
- you have severe pain in your arm.
- your arm feels swollen or tight.
- you develop numbness, pins and needles or weakness in your hand or arm.
- your hand becomes unusually cold, pale or discoloured.

Alternatively, you can also:

- contact NHS 24 on 111.
- make an urgent appointment with your GP. or go to your local A&E department.

We record when things go wrong with blood donation. We do this to improve our procedures and to make sure our donors are as safe as possible. We always investigate severe, unintended and unexpected complications of donation. We follow the Duty of Candour regulations and share our findings with anyone who has been affected.





Contact us

t: 0345 90 90 999

e: nss.snbtSENquiry@nhs.scot

w: scotblood.co.uk

 [givebloodforscotland](https://www.facebook.com/givebloodforscotland)

 [@givebloodscot](https://twitter.com/givebloodscot)

This publication can be made available in large print, braille (English only), audio tape and different languages. Please contact nss.communications@nhs.scot for further information.

NATL 153 02

Published November 2020