

Bruising on the Back of the Hands and Arms

Bruising on the back of the hands and arms is common. Dermatologists call it “Bateman’s purpura”. These flat blotches start out red, then turn purple, darken a bit further and eventually fade. They differ from normal bruises in several ways. First, usually there wasn’t much of a knock or injury to cause them. Second, they are not tender. Finally, they last longer than normal bruises, often a few weeks.

They usually occur on the back of the hands and the forearms. The skin is sun-damaged, thin and wrinkly, almost flimsy looking. Mostly seen in older individuals, Bateman’s purpura is due to the weakened state of blood vessel walls from many years of sun exposure. Blood thinners, including Aspirin, coumadin, alcohol and vitamin E all may worsen the condition. Steroids, either as a cream, pill or inhaled for lung disease, can also contribute to the pathogenesis.

Cosmetics can be used to camouflage the lesions. Dermablend cosmetics are recommended for dermatologic conditions, such as Bateman’s purpura. Dermablend can be found at most department stores. Covermark Cosmetics are also excellent at covering this condition. Vitamin K cream applied to the skin daily has been said to improve this condition, but not everyone benefits from this. Daily application of alpha-hydroxy acid cream, or Retin-A prescription cream will increase skin thickness and may help. For women, progesterone hormone lotion also helps.