

## *Skin Bruising (Ecchymoses)*

The blotchy areas of hemorrhage in the skin, often observed on the back of the hands of older adults, are called ecchymoses (singular ecchymosis), or also as areas of bruising (purpura). Older adults are commonly observed at the shopping market, church and nursing homes, with bruises on the back of their hands. Sometimes the bruises are on the legs or arms. Doctors see patients with ecchymoses frequently, yet few detect this as an overt sign of scurvy.



The presence of a purpuric rash is known to be a sign of scurvy. [Australasian J Dermatology 44: 48-51, 2003] Vitamin C deficiency is widely underreported in industrialized countries. Scurvy, as evidenced by ecchymoses, is resolved with the provision of supplemental vitamin C. [Annals Dermatology Venereology 127: 510-12, 2000; Annals Emergency Med 11: 446-48, 1982] Bleeding gums and coiled hair are other observable signs of scurvy that often accompany ecchymoses. [Annals Emergency Med 10: 652-55, 1981; Int J Derm 21: 209-11, 1982] If you observe these signs in an older family member or friend, you might suggest vitamin C supplements, preferably with accompanying bioflavonoids, up to 2000 milligrams per day.

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