

Contusions (Bruises)

A contusion, or bruise, is an injury that is sustained by a direct blow from another person or object. Any bodily structure, including bones and organs, can sustain a contusion. Symptoms of a contusion can include redness, swelling, discoloration or loss of function of the involved body part. The lack of discoloration (medically known as ecchymoses) does not mean that a contusion is not present.

Care of Contusions

The best care of contusions is to follow the RICE plan of care:

- Rest- Avoid using the injured body part to decrease the stress to the injured area.
- Ice- Apply ice to the injured body part to reduce swelling. You should ice for at least 10 minutes, but no longer than 20 minutes. Never apply heat to a new injury for the first 2-4 days. This will increase the swelling and prolong the recovery time.
- Compression- A compression wrap, such as an ACE bandage, should be applied to the body part to help reduce swelling. Do not wear a compression wrap while you sleep. Your blood pressure drops when you are asleep and the compression wrap can hinder your circulation.
- Elevation- Keep the injured body part higher than your heart. This will also aid in reducing the swelling.

Most contusions are minor in nature and don't involve major damage to tissue or loss of function. These can be dealt with easily at home. Severe contusions that result in a loss of function or severe pain should be evaluated by the athletic trainer. Severe contusions can result in internal bleeding and blood pooling (hematoma) that can have permanent side effects. Severe and bony contusions can last for a prolonged period of time and often require an activity modification such as custom padding.