

Patient Information for Solar purpura - Skin

Overview

Solar purpura refers to red blood cells leaking into previously sun-damaged skin. It is usually on the arms and the backs of the hands in older adults. The skin appears to be bruised with dark red to purple coloration. The bruised appearance may not heal for 2 or 3 weeks.

Who's At Risk

Older adults are most often affected, usually after minor bumps that went unnoticed. Prior overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun weakens the blood vessels, allowing blood to escape under the skin. Solar purpura is more likely to occur in adults with long-term exposure to the sun, and it is most noticeable on people with lighter skin phototypes.

Your chances of developing solar purpura are increased if you are taking certain medications, such as corticosteroids, aspirin, blood thinners, and anticoagulants such as Coumadin.

Signs & Symptoms

Look for dark red-to-purple patches on the arms, backs of the hands, legs, and sometimes face and neck. You may or may not recall bumping the affected area of skin.

Self-Care Guidelines

Solar purpura is a harmless, benign condition. Further exposure to the sun should be prevented by using sunscreen and covering exposed skin.

When to Seek Medical Care

When areas of "bruising" appear without explanation, you should consult your doctor to rule out other, more serious conditions or malignancies, and for advice on managing and healing the affected area.

Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe

Although solar purpura is harmless, your doctor may recommend ways to speed up the healing process, and to prevent further damage.