

Hemosiderin Staining

What is hemosiderin staining?

- Hemosiderin staining is a yellow, brown, or black mark on your skin that looks like a bruise. Stains usually happen on the lower leg.

What causes hemosiderin staining?

- Hemoglobin in your red blood cells carries oxygen from your lungs to your other tissues. When red blood cells break down, the hemoglobin releases iron. This iron is stored as hemosiderin under your skin tissues. When hemosiderin builds up, it can cause staining.
- Hemosiderin staining can be caused by:
 - › Trauma (like a broken ankle, a broken bone in the lower leg, or an injury causing blood to pool [collect] in the leg)
 - › Edema (swelling) in the leg
 - › Heart disease
 - › High blood pressure
 - › Venous ulcers (a break or opening in the skin caused by poor blood flow in the veins)
 - › Vein treatments like sclerotherapy (an injection to treat varicose veins)



You are at a higher risk of hemosiderin staining if:

- › your skin has more melanin (is darker).
- › you have been in the sun without protection (like clothes or sunscreen).
- › you have sensitive skin.
- › you are taking certain medications. Talk with your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) about this.
- › you have a scar from a procedure or an injury.
- › you have thin skin (your skin looks almost transparent [clear] and you can see your veins and or tendons easily).

How is hemosiderin treated?

- Your primary health care provider may prescribe a topical cream to put on your skin. This may fade the staining, but it may not go away completely.
- Some people with hemosiderin have laser treatment to help fade the staining. How many treatments you may need depends on how dark the stain is. The stains may not go away completely.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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