Why Do People With Fibromyalgia Bruise Easily?

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Fibromyalgia and Bruising: Does Fibromyalgia Cause Bruising?

Some days are better than others for sufferers of fibromyalgia. The not-so-good days can make you feel like you've been beaten black and blue. The slightest touch, handshake, hug or squeeze can be excruciating — leaving you sore, achy and shying away from contact with those you love. One sufferer of fibromyalgia described it this way:

“Every inch of me feels bruised, tender to touch. My shirt brushing against my arm feels like someone pushing on a bruise. First it was just my upper arms, then my shoulders, chest and stomach joined in this tender-fest. When I bend down, my skin hurts as it wrinkles against itself.”

Oftentimes, that bruised feeling is much more than a feeling; it is actual bruises — unexplained marks on the arms, legs, hips and various parts of the body. I experienced this myself just yesterday.

During my nightly facial cleansing, I went to dry my face and just below my left eye, was an unsightly purple bruise. I had not bumped my face or rubbed my eyes with excessive pressure — at least not enough to cause bruising — yet there it was for all to see!

Fibromyalgia, Bruising and Tender Skin

It is estimated that between 70 and 80 percent of people with fibromyalgia suffer from skin problems associated with their illness. On top of the skin problems, these complaints often make fibromyalgia symptoms even worse.

Besides the added pain, they can be unsightly, and cause some FM sufferers to shy away from social activities. It just seems easier to stay home than to cope with the embarrassment or the discomfort of trying to explain.

Two common skin problems are:

- **Tender skin:** As previously mentioned, many fibromyalgia sufferers report that their skin actually hurts when it is touched. Referred to as *allodynia*, this sensitive skin can cause numerous problems, from redness and swelling, to bruising and scarring. Although the causes of tender skin are still a mystery to doctors, scientists and researchers, it is speculated that allodynia may be a direct result of a dysfunction in the brain’s central nervous system. Fibromyalgia prevents the brain from reading pain signals correctly, and this may cause the skin to feel sore or tender to the touch.
- **Rashes:** A fibromyalgia skin rash often develops on the body as a result of dry skin and itching. These skin rashes appear as raised bumps on the skin, and can often be scaly to the touch. Some sufferers have noted that after scratching these areas even lightly, deep bruising occurs lasting for days and sometimes weeks.

Where Are These Unexplained Bruises Coming From?

For a suffer from FM, pain is an everyday occurrence so sometimes a bump to the leg, a stub of a toe, or a pinch of a finger might not go as noticed as it would by someone who does not deal with pain on a daily basis.

Pain is a trigger that something is wrong or something has happened that needs attention. However, if the pain is a part of one's everyday life, certain accidents may not even be noticed until an "unexplained" bruise suddenly appears.

Some of the more obvious causes of bruises, and why they seem to appear out of nowhere, include:

- **Clumsiness:** Due to loss of mobility at times, those suffering from fibromyalgia find they are clumsier than they have been in the past. Disequilibrium (imbalance in your inner ear) can cause dizziness and lightheadedness to the point of wobbling and bumping into furniture and walls. This could account for some of the bruising we don't even notice until later.
- **Fibro fog:** Whether because of chronic fatigue, poor sleep, persistent pain, vitamin deficiencies, etc., FM sufferers struggle with forgetfulness, clarity of thinking and more. It is possible that certain accidents during the day that might have caused bruising were simply forgotten.
- **Sleep deprivation:** Due to the lack of sleep, muscle repair does not occur properly for those suffering from fibromyalgia, and therefore muscles take longer to heal and regenerate after micro injuries or trauma, as is experienced by everyone in day to day life.

How to Cope With Fibromyalgia Bruising

If you are experiencing easy bruising on a frequent basis, there are some practical things you can do to reduce the risk of trauma to your skin and muscles. Or if involved in more strenuous activities, wear protective clothing.

If kneeling, put padding under your knees and legs. If working with arms resting on a desk or countertop, place a soft cloth or small pillow under your arms. Avoid activities that will lead to hard blows.

If bruising comes along with a rash or itchy skin, ask your doctor about creams or ointments to combat the urge to scratch, thus avoiding possible bruising.

In addition, oral medications may need to be adjusted for severe bruising; however, never stop taking any medications or supplements without first talking with your doctor. Should the bruising become severe, there could be another underlying condition; report significant changes to your doctor.

Finally, treat yourself with the utmost care. Some things cannot be avoided. Do not beat yourself up mentally for physical conditions beyond your control. Make the changes you can and be accepting of yourself and the things that cannot be avoided.

Make every effort to enjoy each day and experience pleasurable moments in your day, no matter how small. There is life beyond the flare-ups, pain and daily irritations. Keep pressing through despite your fibromyalgia and bruising problems!