Anyone who is rushing about doing heaps of things can bang into something (or someone) if they are in too much of a rush. Kids are often in a hurry to get somewhere, play sport, want to be first in line etc. and so kids often have bruises in many colours, decorating some parts of their bodies.

**What is a bruise?**

Bruises are caused by banging yourself against something or being hit by something like a ball, or being squeezed hard, eg. when someone pinches you hard or you trap your finger in the pantry door when you are trying to shut it quickly (you know, when you hear mum coming!)

Small blood vessels in the skin or just under it break so that some blood escapes from them. The blood vessels heal quickly so that they do not go on bleeding, but the blood that has already leaked out stays under the skin, around the place that is hurt, for a few days.

**What happens?**

- It feels painful.
- The bruised area swells up.
- Your skin goes red and later black and blue, then yellow after a few days.
- You feel sore all around the area of the bruise.

**What you can do**

As soon as you have hurt yourself stop further bleeding and swelling (bruising) by using R.I.C.E.

- **R** Rest the injured part.
- **I** Ice or cold pack on the bruise (20 minutes on and 20 minutes off). Wrap the ice in a cloth rather than putting it straight onto your skin. (Frozen peas in a plastic bag makes a good ice pack).
- **C** Compression bandaging. Wrap a bandage firmly round the area, but not too tight. If it hurts it is too tight.
- **E** Elevate the injured part (lift it higher). You may need to make a sling to support the injured part or find a cushion or a jumper to rest it on.

If you or your friend is badly hurt then you need to get help quickly. Send someone else for help, if possible so that you can stay and comfort your friend while you are waiting.
If someone is hurt, the most important things you can do while you are waiting are to:

> make sure you and your friend are safe (eg that you are not sitting in the middle of the road)
> stop any bleeding (if you don't know how to stop the bleeding see the section 'Cuts - what to do' in the topic Cuts and grazes).

Everything else can wait until an adult arrives to help you.

**Sporting injuries**

You can use R.I.C.E. for injuries like:

> Sprained ankles - when you go over onto your ankle and it hurts.
> Pulled muscles - when you feel like something has torn in your leg, arm or even in your back.
> Bruises caused by being hit by a ball, bat or even somebody's body, which has crashed into you.
> Fractures - (broken or cracked bones) ice can stop swelling and make it easier for the doctor to set the bone properly. Broken bones feel better if the body part that is broken can be held very still too.

Injuries will happen and there will be lots of times in your life when you will need to reach for the first aid stuff for yourself or someone else.

If you already know what to do you will be able to:

> keep calm
> help yourself or your friend
> help the body to start healing itself.

**Finding out about first aid**

You may be able to do a Junior First Aid course at your school or with a first aid organisation like St. John's or Red Cross.

You may want to become a Junior First Aider.

If you are not that keen on knowing all about first aid, it is still a good idea to ask mum or dad to show you:

> what first aid materials are in your home
> where they are kept
> how to use them. Eg. How much antiseptic to use, how to wash an injury (and what to use), how to put on a dressing.

Ask them to supervise you while you deal with cuts and bruises on yourself and others, then you will feel confident if you have to do it all by yourself sometime.
Answering your questions

Question:
How long do bruises last?

Answer:
This depends on how big the bruise is but most bruises will last for about a week.

For the bruise to go away, the haemoglobin (say he-ma-glow-bin) in the blood (that's the red chemical inside red blood cells) needs to be changed to something which can be dissolved in plasma (the clear runny part of blood).

As it is changed, it also changes colour from red to blue to yellow, so that a bruise changes colour before it goes away.

Question:
Why does my grandad get so many bruises when he doesn't play sport or anything?

Answer:
Sometimes elderly people have skin and blood vessels that break easily with only small knocks, causing bruises. Some people need to take medication to 'thin' their blood so that blood can flow through blood vessels easily and clots do not form inside the blood vessels. 'Thinning' the blood means that the medication slows down blood clotting. If the blood is 'thin' small injuries can cause large bruises because it takes longer for the bleeding under the skin to stop.

This is what some kids told us about:

Their worst bruise!

Ryan
"I was jumping on the bed at my friends party when we fell off and I bumped my head on the bed leg. I had to have stitches and I got a bruise that lasted for ages and I couldn't open my eye."

Harriet
"I banged into the door of my room. I got a big bruise on my arm."

Warwick
"I caught my hand in the car door."

Nellie
"I got hit in the face by a basket ball, I had black eyes and I could hardly see."

Isaac
"The swing came back and hit me. I had a big bruise on my stomach."

What was your worst bruise?
Ouch that hurt
I walked into school the other day.
Saw a game of handball. I wanted to play.
I put down my books and pencil case.
I asked to play and I took my place.
At last my turn. I started to play,
Slipped over and fell, didn't know what to say.
I looked at my knee and a bruise came up, "ping".
In the next few moments it started to sting.
It's really annoying. It just won't go.
I told all my friends and they said, "So?"
I told my mum but what does she say?
"Don't worry dear it will go away."
Should I believe what she says with a smile?
I guess I should wait for a little while.

I'm a rainbow
That's when I played football.
That's when I hit a tree.
A ball hit me on my eye there.
A desk banged into me.
"I've got seventeen now,"
I'm telling my friend Corey.
We're not looking at my photos.
It's the 'where I got my bruises' story.
BH