

Bruises and injuries in Babies & Non-Mobile Children

NHS hospitals and all their employees have a duty to protect children. Staff are expected to raise concerns if they believe the care or welfare of a child is at risk. Each situation is considered individually. Although this is upsetting and difficult for those with parental responsibility, the child's wellbeing and safety comes first.

This leaflet explains some of the more common situations where professionals are likely to be involved and an overview of the process of assessment. The professional who has raised concerns will discuss this with you and answer your questions. If any concerns are raised, it is important that these are investigated fully

Is bruising common in babies and non-mobile children?

Accidents do occur. You may feel that you are able to explain the reason for your child having a bruise or other injury. However, your baby or child will still need to be carefully assessed. It can take an opinion from a specialist children's doctor

(consultant or registrar paediatrician) to be able to tell the difference between bruises and other types of mark. The actions taken will be directed by protocols which are similar to those in other NHS hospitals throughout the country.

Bruising in babies who are not rolling or crawling is unusual. It is very unusual for a baby to get a bruise during everyday activities such as nappy changes, bathing or feeding and this applies to other non-mobile children (a child unable to move around on their own). Bruising can be related to a health condition which has not been previously identified. Very occasionally bruising may be due to deliberate injury.

What Happens Now?

Everyone working with children must follow safeguarding children protocols when they find a bruise or a mark which appears to be a bruise on a non-mobile baby or child or other injuries that cause concern. In all these situations a referral must be made to Children's Services.

What will the specialist doctor do?

Your child will normally need to be seen by a specialist paediatric doctor who will ask for your consent as the

parent or carer, to examine your child and if necessary for any other tests. The doctor will ask about your child's medical history, the circumstances of the presentation and perform a full examination which includes undressing your baby or child. Once the examination has been completed the paediatrician will discuss the outcome of their assessment with you and a social worker.

There may be a recommendation that further investigations are required such as taking blood from your child to ensure there are no underlying health conditions. In younger children and babies, injuries can be difficult to find. For example, bones may be broken without any obvious external signs. If x-rays and scans are required you will be given a separate information leaflet and your consent will be requested.

These tests can take time and may involve your child staying in hospital for a few days. If it is not possible to explain the cause of your child's injury it may be necessary for visiting to be restricted and/or your care to be supervised. This will always be explained to you and do not hesitate to ask questions.

What will Children's Social Care do?

They will check whether you have received services from them in the past and may ask for information from your GP and your Health Visitor or School Nurse. They may be in contact with the Police to ask them to assist with information gathering. If necessary they may make arrangements to speak to you either by phone or in person and may want to visit you at home. **Referral to Children's Services is not an accusation of wrongdoing, but a way of looking for causes of bruising in the same way that the doctor looks for illnesses.** They will discuss their findings with the specialist doctor who examined your child to decide together whether any further action needs to be taken.

All of this is very upsetting, why does it have to be done?

We know this can be very upsetting but the only way of picking up serious causes for bruising is to investigate every case where it occurs. Please be reassured that you will be treated with courtesy and sensitivity and your explanations will be listened to and discussed with you. You will be kept informed at all times and you can ask questions at any time.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call:

01803 655838 or email
tsdft.feedback@nhs.net

You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person. Alternatively, it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

Have Your Say

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of the ward staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Patient Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.patientopinion.org.uk

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.



Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

PATIENT INFORMATION

Bruising or Injury to Non-Mobile Children

Working with you, for you