

Bruising or injury to non-mobile children

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

Bruises in babies and non-mobile children

A bruise or mark has been noticed on your child. This leaflet has been provided to explain Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust's bruising protocol. This protocol will be followed by all hospitals in Devon and similar protocols exist in other NHS hospitals across the country.

Is bruising common in babies and non-mobile children?

No. It is very unusual for a baby who is not rolling or crawling to get a bruise during everyday activities such as nappy changes, bathing or feeding. This also applies to 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 such as haemophilia or a blood disease. Very occasionally bruising may be due to deliberate injury.

Therefore, it is important that each baby or child is fully assessed. Accidents do occur. You may feel that you are able to explain the reason for your baby having a bruise or mark. However, your baby will still need to be carefully assessed. It can take an opinion from a consultant paediatrician (specialist children's doctor) to be able to tell the difference between bruises and other types of mark.

What happens now?

Everyone working with children must follow the bruising protocol when they find a bruise or a mark on a non-mobile baby or child. Sometimes, even when children are moving around by themselves, there can be concern about how a mark or bruise occurred and in all these situations a referral should always be made to Children's Social Care.

What will the paediatrician do?

The paediatrician will do a full examination which includes undressing your baby or child. They will ask for your consent, as the parent or carer, to perform examinations or other tests. Once the examination has been completed, the paediatrician will discuss the outcome of the assessment with you.

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 some cases, other tests such as X-rays or scans may also be requested to enable the paediatrician to fully assess your child. 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 bruise 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 Social Care 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 paediatrician 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 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple. Alternatively, it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS 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 staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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