



What is going on?

You have been given this leaflet as we need to refer you to see a specialist doctor to examine a bruise, bite or mark on your child which we are unclear about.

Is bruising common in babies?

No. Bruising in babies who are non-mobile (a baby/child who is unable to move around on their own) is unusual. It is very unusual for a baby to get a bruise during everyday activities such as nappy changes, bathing or feeding. Bruising can be related to a health condition which has not been previously identified. However, sometimes bruising in babies is due to a deliberate injury and therefore it is important that each baby 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. An opinion from a consultant paediatrician (specialist children's doctor) is needed to be able to tell the difference between bruises and other types of mark.

I have explained what caused the bruising - don't you believe me?

Even where babies fall or get knocked it is unusual for them to bruise. There are also some important medical causes of bruising which may seriously affect the child's health. Very occasionally bruising may be due to deliberate injury. Even where there is an apparently simple explanation it is important in all circumstances for professionals to make further enquiries.

What will happen next?

Everyone working with children must follow the bruising protocol when they find a bruise, or a mark which appears to be a bruise, in a non-mobile baby/child. Sometimes, even when children are moving around by themselves, there can be concern about how a mark or bruise occurred and in these situations a protocol is followed. The concerns usually relates to where the bruise has occurred. For example, a bruise on a shin may occur through a mobile baby's natural movements but a bruise behind the ear would be unlikely to have occurred through independent movement.

1. A referral is made to Children's Services.
2. Your baby's case will be assessed by Children's Services. Part of this assessment involves gathering information from other agencies who may hold information about your family, or who may be working directly with you such as the GP, Health Visitor and Police. **This is called a Strategy Discussion.**
3. A request will be made for an assessment by a paediatrician at your local hospital. This should be done as soon as possible the same day.

What does the Paediatrician (specialist doctor) do?

The Paediatrician will ask you all about your baby/child, This will include when the bruise/mark was first noticed and whether you know how the bruise may have happened. The paediatrician will do a full examination which includes undressing your baby. 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 their assessment with you. There may be a recommendation that further investigations are required such as taking blood from your baby to ensure there are no underlying health conditions. In some cases, tests such as X-rays or scans may also be requested to enable the paediatrician to fully assess your baby. These tests can take time and may involve staying in hospital so it would be helpful to take some provisions with you just in case. When X-rays are required they will need repeating in about two weeks. The paediatrician will also speak to Children's Services to let them know the outcome of the assessment. Together the paediatrician and Children's Services will jointly decide whether any further action is needed.

I understand the need to see a Paediatrician but why do I need a referral to Children's Social Care?

Although rare, injuries or bleeding are occasionally caused by deliberate acts. It is important that where this occurs, it is addressed as soon as possible in order to support the family and protect the child. Referral to Children's Social Care is not an accusation of wrongdoing, but a way of looking for causes of injuries in the same way that the Doctor looks for illness. Even when bruising is due to falls and knocks the family may benefit from advice on accident prevention, home safety and occasionally the help of social care or early help teams.

All this is very upsetting. I feel as though I am being accused of hurting my child and worried about the assessment?

Whilst we appreciate this can be very upsetting and make you feel anxious, you can be reassured that you will be treated with courtesy and sensitivity and your explanations will be listened to and discussed with you. You will also be kept fully informed so that you know exactly what is going on and why. If you do not understand any part of the process and need further explanation, then ask the professionals involved who can then provide you with more information.

My child has a disability and bruising is one of the consequences of their limited mobility. What will happen to my child?

Professionals know that bruising in disabled children and young people especially those with additional communication difficulties is more difficult to assess. The same referral process will be followed as for children who are not independently mobile or in ambulant children where bruising is a concern. If the bruising is consistent with any explanation provided by the carer or the young person then, and in the context of their disability, a written record will be kept using a body map and advice will be given if that is considered appropriate. There is very strong research evidence that disabled children, particularly those with additional communication and learning difficulties, are more likely to suffer abuse from carers than their non-disabled peers, therefore this always has to be explored.

Where do I get more information about this?

We understand you will want to know where this policy comes from. We can either give this to you or you can access it at [Bruising in Babies and Children who are Not Independently Mobile \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://bruisinginbabiesandchildrenwhonotindependentlymobile.proceduresonline.com). This will explain that agencies always have to act in the best interest of the child. If you have any further concerns or worries please talk to the person giving you this leaflet who can direct you to the best person to answer your queries.

Children's Safeguarding Customer Service Centre Number:

01522 782111 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

or 01522 782333 (outside office hours)