

What's going on? Information for parents and carers

Bruising in infants who are not independently mobile

Why is bruising in babies and infants such a concern?

It is difficult to cause bruising in babies and infants that are not able to move around independently during normal day-to-day activities such as feeding, nappy changing and normal handling.

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 causes of bruising which may seriously affect the child's health.

The child may bruise easily, for example, due to haemophilia, or be suffering from a blood disease such as leukaemia or an infection such as meningitis.

Very occasionally bruising may be due to deliberate injury.

Even where there is an apparently simple explanation it is important for professionals to make further enquiries.

Why do I need to be referred to Children's Services?

Although rare, bruising is occasionally caused by deliberate injury. It is important that, where this occurs, it is picked up as soon as possible in order to support the family and to protect the child.

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. Even when bruising is due to falls and knocks the family may benefit from advice on accident prevention and home safety.

What will happen next?

Arrangements will be made by Children's Services for you to have an appointment with a Paediatrician as soon as possible and within 24 hours.

This may mean attending your nearest hospital or community health clinic. There the paediatrician will talk to you about your child, examine your child fully and decide whether or not to do further investigations.

A body map will be completed to show the location, size and severity of the bruise which will remain on the medical record. The paediatrician will talk to Children's Services.

Why does my child need to see a Paediatrician?

It is rare for babies and infants to have a bruise. A bruise can be a sign of an underlying health condition, a blood disease or an infection.

This means that it is important for a Paediatrician to examine your baby and discuss with you why there might be a bruise and to rule out or diagnose these more serious conditions.

It also sometimes takes an expert to tell the difference between a bruise and certain types of birthmark which can look very similar to bruising.

What will Children's Services do?

Children's Services will make some enquiries about you and your child. They will check whether you have received services from them in the past, ask for information from your GP and your health visitor and will make arrangements to talk to you.

This may be at the same time as your attendance with the paediatrician or at a separate appointment and they may want to visit you at home. They will then discuss their findings with the Paediatrician who examined your child to decide what further action or treatment (if any) needs to be taken.

All this is very upsetting. I feel as though I am being accused of hurting my child.

Why do we have to be put through this?

We know this can be very upsetting. 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 at all times so that you know exactly what is going on and why. You can ask questions at any time and will be given the opportunity to discuss your concerns fully at every stage.

All professionals working with children are expected as part of their professional duties to make enquiries to ensure that children are kept safe from harm.

Where bruising is non-accidental immediate steps can be taken to protect the child from further harm.