

Bruising or injury to non-mobile children

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Bruises in babies and non-mobile children

This leaflet has been provided to explain Royal Devon'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 and/or injury 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 or injury 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.

A bruise, mark or injury has been noticed on your child. Accidents do occur. You may feel that you are able to explain the reason for your baby having a bruise, injury 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, other types of mark or identify any possible medical conditions/causes.

What happens now?

Everyone working with children must follow the bruising and injury protocol when this has been observed in a non-mobile baby or child. Sometimes, even when children are moving around by themselves, there can be concern about how an injury 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.

Further investigations may be required such as taking blood from your child, skeletal survey x-rays, a CT scan or MRI scan to ensure there are no underlying health conditions or injury.

These investigations can take time and may involve your child staying in hospital for a few days.

What will Children's Social Care do?

They will check whether you have received support 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 or injury 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.

If it is not possible to explain the cause of your child's bruise or injury or if it is thought someone may have harmed your child, 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.

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, please contact the PALS desk on 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services) or on 01271 314090 (for North Devon services). Alternatively, email us at rduh.pals@nhs.net

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare 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 staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk or freephone 0800 122 3135.

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