

What's Going On?

Information for parents and carers about bruising to immobile children



You have been given this leaflet because someone who supports you or your child has come across a bruise on your child.

Any professional who comes across bruising in a child who is not able to move under their own steam (non-independently mobile or immobile) are required to refer the child to a specialist child doctor (Paediatrician).

Immobile children are not yet crawling, cruising or walking independently or are older children who are not mobile because of a disability.

The child will also be referred to Children's Social Care (in Durham known as Children's Services and in Darlington known as Services for People) who will work with the specialist child doctor to decide what further steps, if any, need to be taken.

Safeguarding children together

If you would like to discuss this further please contact:

Durham County Council's Children's Services on: 0845 8505010 (24 hours)

Website: www.durham-lscb.gov.uk

Darlington Borough Council's Services for People on: 01325 346867 (office hours) or 08702 528727 (out of office hours)

Website: <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Children/LSCB/lscb.htm>

Q: Why do immobile children with a bruise need to see a specialist doctor?

A: It is rare for children who are not able to move around by themselves to have a bruise. A bruise can be a sign of a health condition, a blood disease or an infection. This means it is important that a specialist child doctor looks at your child and discusses with you why there might be a bruise.

Q: Why is bruising in immobile children such a concern?

A: 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. Occasionally bruising may be due to deliberate injury. Even where there is an apparent simple explanation it is important to rule out these more serious conditions. It also sometimes takes an expert to tell the difference between a bruise and certain type of birthmark. It is difficult to cause bruising in immobile children with day-to-day activities such as feeding, nappy changing and normal handling. Even where babies fall or get knocked it is unusual for them to bruise (unlike children who are crawling or walking who often get bruises). However, there are also some important causes of bruising which may seriously affect the child's health.

Q: I understand the reason for seeing a child specialist but why do I need to be referred to Children's Social Care?

A: 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 protect the child. 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 illness.

Q: What will happen next?

A: Either a health professional, or a member of Children's Social Care, will contact you to talk to you about your child and what will happen next. Arrangements will be made to have an appointment as soon as possible, and preferably straight away, with a specialist child doctor. The specialist child doctor will talk to you about your child, examine your child fully and decide whether or not to do further investigations such as blood tests or x-rays and decide whether your child needs any further treatment. The specialist child doctor will then talk to Children's Social Care. It may be necessary for Children's Social Care to liaise with trained officers from the Police.

Q: What will Children's Social Care and the health specialist do?

A: Children's Social Care and the health professionals 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 speak to you either by phone or in person. This may be at the same time as your attendance with the specialist child doctor or at a separate appointment and they may want to visit you at home. They will then discuss their findings with the specialist child doctor who examined your child to decide together whether any further action needs to be taken or any treatment given.

Q: All of this is very upsetting. I feel as though I am being accused of hurting my child. Why do I have to be put through this?

A: We know this can be very upsetting but the only way of picking up serious cause for bruising is to investigate every case where it occurs. However 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 informed at all times so that you know 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.