

This briefing is aimed at professionals who work with children and families in Brighton and Hove

Purpose of the briefing:

Infancy is the riskiest time of life for a child, with the risk of death or serious injury from Non-Accidental Injury (NAI), Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants (SUDI) and infectious diseases being common causes.

Research shows that it is very unusual for pre-mobile babies to sustain bruises accidentally and bruising in this age group raises significant concerns about physical abuse. Recent serious case reviews and individual child protection cases both nationally and locally have indicated that professionals have sometimes underestimated the significance of bruising in children who are not independently mobile. As a result, there have been several cases where bruised children have suffered significant abuse that might have been prevented if action had been taken at an earlier stage.

What do we know about bruising?

Bruising is the most common injury in physical child abuse (RCPCH [Evidence & reviews - RCPCH Child Protection Portal](#))



Characteristics of bruising that are suggestive of physical child abuse

Bruises that are seen away from bony prominences

Bruising in babies and children who are not independently mobile

Bruises with petechiae (dots of blood under the skin) around them

Multiple bruises of uniform shape

Bruises that carry an imprint – of an implement or cord

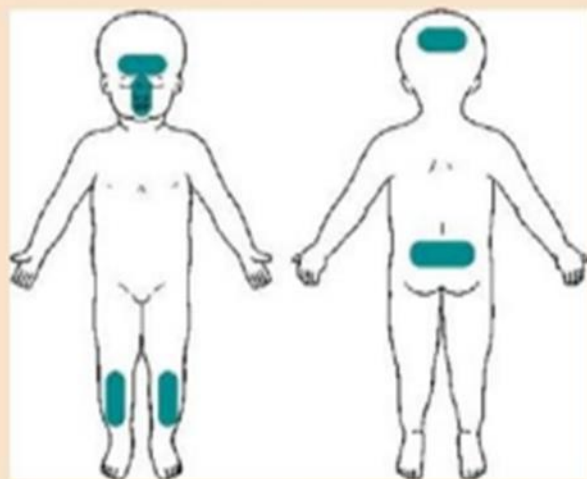
Multiple bruises in clusters

Bruises to the face, back, abdomen, arms, buttocks, ears and hands

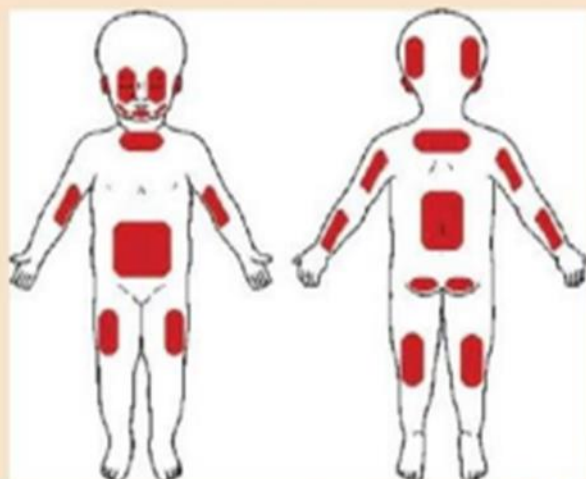
Unexplained Subconjunctival haemorrhage underneath the clear surface of the eye (conjunctiva).

Where would you expect to see bruising from a non-accidental injury?

Accidental bruising patterns



Abusive bruising patterns



Points to consider

- Has there been Information sharing between agencies of risk factors?
- What is the parent/carer reporting about the injury?
- Is the child mobile?
- Is the injury in keeping with the explanation?
- Is there a need for a verbal handover to another service?
- Have records/Red Book been correctly documented?

A baby should not be discharged from a service if there are ongoing actions requiring follow up.

Remember

- Non-accidental injuries do not always present with typical 'accidental' bruise pattern and In non-mobile babies, accidental injuries are extremely rare due to the mobility of the baby.
- CSC/Police should be arranging an urgent (same day) strategy discussion with a hospital paediatrician.
- Non-mobile babies with unexplained skin marks require an urgent/same day/night medical examination by a paediatrician.
- Infancy is the riskiest time of life for a child, with the risk of death or serious injury from Non-Accidental Injury (NAI), Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants (SUDI) and infectious diseases being common causes.
- Professionals should suspect physical abuse if they observe bruising in a child who is not independently mobile and should refer the child to the Front Door For Families following LSCP procedures – [Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#)
- It is recognised that a percentage of bruising in Non mobile babies will have an innocent explanation (including medical causes). A contact with the Front Door For Families allows proportionate multi-agency decision making, including the potential for a child to be examined by a paediatrician.
- Making a referral should NOT be seen as punitive BUT supportive and essential to establish the cause of the injury, identify any underlying health concerns and safeguard children.
- If you are ever unsure about making a referral or information sharing seek advice from your Safeguarding lead.

Seeing a GP does NOT replace a Child Protection medical - if NAI is suspected and automatic process referring to CSC no need to refer to GP.

Referrals

An Immediate referral to children's social care must be made for non-mobile babies with unexplained skin marks, bruises & injuries and an urgent/same day/night medical examination by a paediatrician.

Brighton & Hove – via Front Door for Families (FDFF) –
[Refer a child or family to Front Door for Families](#)

East Sussex – Single Point of Advice (SPOA) –
[Report a concern about a child or a teenager](#)

West Sussex – Integrated Front Door (IFD) –
[Request support or raise a concern about a child](#)

For reference the guidance and protocols for bruising/marks on children can be found on the Pan Sussex Policies and Procedures Website – [Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual – Unexplained injuries to young children.](#)

[3.2 Information Sharing | Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#)

[Overview | Child maltreatment: when to suspect maltreatment in under 18s | Guidance | NICE](#)

[Not making a referral after bruising to non-mobile babies – SCIE](#)

Working with parents/carers

Parents/carers may be worried or distressed when you begin discussing a bruise or injury that you have noticed on their baby. The medical assessment is important to consider all possible causes, including NAI but also medical causes.

Share the 'My non-independently mobile child has a bruise, unexplained skin mark or possible eye injury - what next?' leaflet with parents/carers and explain that all staff in Sussex follow the 'Bruising in Children who are Not Independently Mobile Guidance' which specifies the actions they should take.

It is good practice to work as collaboratively with families as possible. Professionals should be open and honest with the individual from the outset as to why, what, how and with whom, their information will be shared.

Parent information leaflet [Bruising Leaflet FINAL.pdf \(procedures.org.uk\)](#)

Extended learning:

Long Watch: National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: "The Myth of Invisible Men"
Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers,
September 2021 [Non-Accidental Injury of Children under 1 webinar \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Pan Sussex Bruising injuries in Children who are Not Independently Mobile \(NIM\) Guidance \(9\).pdf \(procedures.org.uk\)](#)

[Bruising: systematic review - RCPCH Child Protection Portal](#)

[Bruises on children \(CORE-INFO leaflet\) \(nspcc.org.uk\)](#)

[Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#)