

# Minnesota Child Abuse Network

## COMMON EVALUATION FOR PHYSICAL ABUSE

### 0 - 6 months

- All Injuries in Infants are Concerning:
  - Oral Injury
  - Bruise(s), Burns, Fracture(s)
  - Head and/or Abdominal Injury
- Head CT (recommended in all)
- Skeletal Survey, Labs Abdominal Injury
- Urine Drug Screen
- May Expect? Eye Exam

### 6 - 12 months

- Any Injuries in Non-Ambulatory Infants
- "Red Flag" Injury, Pattern, or Location
- Unexplained Injury
- Head and/or Abdominal Injury
- Skeletal Survey, Labs Abdominal Injury
- Urine Drug Screen
- May Expect? Neuro-Imaging, Eye Exam

### 2 - 5 years

- "Red Flag" Injury, Pattern, or Location
- Unexplained Injury
- Head and/or Abdominal Injury
- Labs Abdominal Injury, Urine Drug Screen
- May Expect? Neuro-Imaging, Eye Exam, Skeletal Survey

### 1-2 years

- "Red Flag" Injury, Pattern, or Location
- Unexplained Injury
- Head and/or Abdominal Injury
- Skeletal Survey, Labs Abdominal Injury
- Urine Drug Screen
- May Expect? Neuro-Imaging, Eye Exam

### 5 years and older

- Labs Abdominal Injury, Urine Drug Screen
- May Expect? Neuro-Imaging
- Mental Health Assessment

### \* Additional Explanation

- Skeletal Survey – series of x-rays of the skeleton used to identify fractures. Indicated in children under 2-3 years. Expect a repeat in 2 weeks, called a Follow-up Skeletal Survey, if skeletal survey positive and/or injuries are concerning.
- Labs Abdominal Injury – typically liver enzymes & lipase to screen for internal injury
- Neuro-Imaging (head MRI or CT) – indicated in Skull Fracture(s), Bruising Face/Head, Altered Mental Status
- Eye Exam – expect if Positive Neuro-Imaging and/or Altered Mental Status
- Contact a Child Abuse Physician for guidance on evaluation and management

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# Assessment for Physical Abuse: Injury Patterns, “Red Flags” & Child Abuse Programs

**When the following injuries are present,**

**ADDITIONAL MEDICAL EVALUATION IS ALWAYS INDICATED:**

- Rib Fractures
- Metaphyseal Fractures
- Longbone Fracture (non-ambulatory)
- Bruising (infants less than 6 months of age)
- Oral or Pharyngeal Injury (non-ambulatory)
- Abdominal Injury (non-MVC under 5 yrs)
- Head Injury (unwitnessed, unexplained)

**Patterned Skin Injuries & Unusual Locations of Injury**

**TEN-4 FACES**

**TEN**

- Torso (trunk)
- Ear
- Neck

**FACES**

- Frenulum (mouth)
- Auricular area (ear)
- Cheek
- Eyelids (bruising)
- Scleral Hemorrhage (eye)

**4:** Bruises in the TEN distribution in a child under 4 years of age, or **ANY** bruise in an infant less than 4-6 months of age

**Contact a Child Abuse Physician:**

Univ. of Minnesota Masonic Children’s Hospital  
Minneapolis MN  
Center for Safe & Healthy Children  
(612) 273-SAFE (7233) or (612) 365-1000

Hennepin County Medical Center  
Minneapolis MN  
Center for Safe & Healthy Children  
(800) 424-4262 Hennepin Connect

Children’s Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota  
Minneapolis and St. Paul MN  
Midwest Children’s Resource Center (MCRC)  
(651) 220-6750

Mayo Clinic  
Rochester MN  
Mayo Child and Family Advocacy Program  
(507) 266-0443 daytime or (507) 284-2511

Essentia Health  
Duluth MN (218) 786-8364

Gundersen Health System  
La Crosse WI 1-800-362-9567

Sanford Health  
Sioux Falls SD  
Child’s Voice Child Advocacy Center  
(605) 333-2226

Sanford Health  
 Fargo ND  
Child & Adolescent Maltreatment Service  
(CAMS) (701) 234-2000 or (877) 647-1225

**MOST CHILD FATALITIES:**

- i. Occur in children under 4 years of age (80%)
- ii. Occur at the instigation of a caregiver (80%)
- iv. Involve head (leading cause) and/or abdominal (second cause) Injury

**What Is An Unexplained Injury:**

- i. Injury that is not consistent w/ child’s age, developmental abilities, or injury type
- ii. History that is vague or changes w/ time, repetition, or caregiver
- iii. Delay in seeking medical care

**Signs of Head Injury\*:**

- i. Bulging fontanelle (soft spot) in an infant
- ii. Rapidly increasing head circumference
- iii. Bruising/Swelling to Face/Head
- iv. Vomiting or fussiness
- v. Unresponsive, “altered mental status”
- vi. Apnea or change in breathing

**Signs of Abdominal Injury\*:**

- i. Abdominal pain or distention
- ii. Abdominal bruising
- iii. Vomiting
- iv. Lethargic, “altered mental status”
- v. Rectal bleeding
- vi. Presents in shock, low blood pressure

\*Simple household falls rarely result in serious injury.

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These recommendations are not a substitute for expert medical evaluation. It should also not take the place of human decision-making. Injuries that are suspicious for abuse require careful assessment by a physician or medical provider with expertise in child abuse.