



Child Abuse is anything that intentionally endangers the development, security or survival of a child.

Can present in many ways:

1. Physical
2. Sexual
3. Emotional/Psychological
4. Neglect
5. Exposure to intimate Partner Violence

CONCERNING FEATURES ON HISTORY / EXAM

Unexplained bruises (anywhere) <u>or</u> Bruising in unusual areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-padded areas → buttocks, abdomen ▪ Posterior surfaces → scapula, back of hands ▪ Other → ears, axilla, genitals <p>DDx: birth marks, meningococemia, bleeding (ITP, hemophilia, leukemia)</p>	
Uncommon fractures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rib fractures ▪ Bucket handle fractures (in infants) ▪ Fractures in various stages of healing 	
Any injury with a...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pattern or bilateral / symmetrical distribution (ex: glove & stocking burns) ▪ Reported mechanism of injury that is inconsistent with the actual injury 	

Bruises or Fractures in an Infant:

If they aren't cruising, they aren't bruising

INVESTIGATIONS TO CONSIDER

- Head-to-toe exam → look for bruises, burns, cuts & signs of neglect
- Skeletal Survey → acute or occult injuries
- CT / MRI head → acute/occult intracranial hemorrhage or brain injury
- Ophthalmology consult → look for retinal hemorrhages
- Vitamin B12, folate → nutritional deficiencies may suggest neglect
- Abdominal CT, liver & pancreatic enzymes → to look for intra-abdominal trauma
- Serum & urine toxicology → if there are concerns about ingestion

Remember to rule out disorders that may mimic abuse:

- Osteogenesis imperfecta, metabolic bone disease → x-rays, PTH, Vit D, Ca, phos, alkaline phosphatase, genetic testing
- Bleeding disorders → CBC, PTT, INR, fibrinogen, blood smear, von Willebrand & hemophilia testing, D-dimer

Reporting is Required:

Each province has their own child protection act, but all have similar stipulations that anyone with reasonable and probable grounds to believe a child is being abused or exploited must report.

How to Report:

- Contact Child & Family Services || Child Welfare || Children Services (naming may vary across provinces)
- Consult your local child maltreatment team/experts if available



ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE

Child abuse is a severe adverse childhood experience that has been proven to dramatically increase the risk of physical & mental health sequelae and multimorbidity in the long term. The risk of developing long term health complications and the number of comorbidities accumulated over time are directly proportional to the number of adverse childhood experiences one has faced.

MANAGEMENT

DO:

- ✓ Familiarize yourself with your local reporting process
- ✓ Keep detailed documentation (including images if your EMR allows)
- ✓ Consider a broad differential including both inflicted injury & mimics
- ✓ Carefully observe interactions between family / household members
- ✓ Treat acute injuries & screen for occult injuries when a child presents with an injury concerning for abuse → see suggested workup above
- ✓ **REPORT**



DO NOT:

- ✗ Attempt to investigate
- ✗ Make accusations
- ✗ Ask leading questions
- ✗ Place yourself or the child in an unsafe situation



Leave these things to the experts!

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