

Screening for Physical Abuse in Children

September 2022

- I. For all injured children, obtain a thorough patient history
 - a. Assess for any red flags
 - i. No explanation or vague explanation for observed injuries
 - ii. Details of the explanation changes dramatically
 - iii. Differing explanations provided by caregivers
 - iv. Provided explanation is inconsistent with physical or developmental capabilities of the child
 - v. Inadequate supervision contributed to the injury
 - vi. Witness caregiver behavior that places the child risk for injury
 - vii. Reported history of abuse
 - viii. Siblings or other children in the household with suspected child abuse
 - ix. Potential history of domestic violence in the house
 - x. Any illegal drug exposure, controlled substances, alcohol, or marijuana
 - b. Ensure that the provided history is consistent with motor development of the child
 - c. In children < 12 months, screen for sentinel injured by history

II. For all injured children, complete a physical examination

Abuse Must be Considered for the Following Injuries			
	0-11 months and not yet cruising	12-24 months or cruising	25-48 months
Eye	Subconjunctival hemorrhage (Sentinel Injury)	Subconjunctival hemorrhage without clear history of trauma	
Mouth	Mouth (including frenulum) injury (Sentinel Injury)		
Skin	Any bruise (Sentinel Injury)	The following injuries: torso, ear neck, frenulum, angle of jaw, cheeks, eyelids, subconjunctivae, and patterned injuries	
Burns	Unexplained, in the shape of a heated object, immersion, or of the perineum/buttocks AND lower extremities		
Fractures	Any fracture except for simple linear parietal skull fracture with consistent history	Classic metaphyseal fractures, rib fractures, scapular fractures, spinous fractures, sternum fractures Any fracture that is unexplained or unexpected per the provided history*	
Head Injury	Subdural hemorrhage/hygroma	Subdual hematoma without appropriate high impact mechanism	
Visceral Injury	Any injury without appropriate high impact mechanism		

*The following are less specific for abuse with an unwitnessed history: clavicle fracture, distal buckle fracture, toddler's fracture, and supracondylar fracture