

Signs of Physical Abuse

- Bruising, welts, laceration, cuts, object marks, bite marks, scratches, fractures, punctures, or burns that cannot be sufficiently explained; particularly bruises on the face, lips, and mouth of infants or on several surface parts of the body at the same time
- On parts of the body where it cannot be detected or caused by accident such as the “soft spots” like the tummy, lower back, back of thighs, upper torso, soles of feet, buttocks, and private parts



- Children seldom bruise their buttocks in accidental falls
- Bruises on the buttocks are in the primary target zone for abuse
- The child's diaper (whether disposable or cloth), plastic pants, and clothing would have afforded some protection to his buttocks
- If the injuries causing the bruises were sustained the previous day, the bruises should be red to purple
- Injuries that have a pattern such as a belt, fly swatter, finger marks, punctures, hand marks on the face
- Rope marks or restraint marks on the child to restrain the child

- Loose or broken teeth
- Look for injuries that are not developmentally in the age range of the child. For instance, bumps and bruises on a baby who is not walking or bruises around the eyes or bumps on the head of an older child who is less likely to get those bruises through a fall or by accident.



- Frequent physical injuries that are attributed to the child's being clumsy or accident –prone
- Injuries that do not seem to fit the explanation given by the parents/caretakers or the child, explanations that are vague or bizarre or that change over time
- Conflicting explanations provided by the child and parents/caretakers or injuries that are attributed to accidents that could not have occurred give the time frame, circumstance or age of the child (burns on a child too young to walk/crawl)
- Parent/caretaker who explains the injury as self inflicted or cause by a sibling
- No medical attention or parental care given to the injury
- Habitual absences from school or lateness without credible reason. Parents may keep child at home until physical evidence of abuse has healed.
- Be suspicious if a child comes to school wearing long-sleeved or high collared clothing on hot days since this may be an attempt to hide injuries
- Awkward movements or difficulty walking or sitting as this may suggest that the child is in pain or suffers from the after effects of repeated injuries

- Repeated bruises, bumps or accidents, scars on the child
- Frequent injuries by siblings
- The bruise or mark appears as though much force was used
- Fearful reactions around the parent, fearful of other adults or fearful of sudden movements, child who backs away or cringes
- Sometimes children with disabilities or premature babies are more vulnerable to abuse due to the stress put on parents who may not be able to meet their special needs
- A child who acts afraid to tell that they are hurt or tell how they got hurt. Many times the children are threatened not to tell and to keep it a secret.
- A child who doesn't seem to want to go home or a child who seems to be frequently left on their own
- A child who is afraid to go to the bathroom or a child who is fearful to go to sleep
- Concern expressed by family members that the child is getting abused

