

# 2021 Identification of Child Physical Abuse Clinical Guideline

## Red Flag Indicators

- “Red Flag” Indicators**
- The child is non-ambulatory with fractures or bruises
  - Injury inconsistent with child’s developmental level
  - Injury is inconsistent with the history given
  - Changing history over time
  - Lack of history
  - Unwitnessed injury
  - Injury is attributed to the child’s siblings or pets
  - Delay seeking medical care

## Soft Tissue Injury

≤ 4 months of age  
AND  
any bruise

≤ 4 years of age  
AND  
bruises of:  
**T**orso, **E**ars, **N**eck

Injury to  
**F**renulum, **A**ngle of jaw,  
**C**heek, **E**yelid, **S**clera

Patterned injury

## Head Trauma

- Irritability in an infant
- Vomiting
- Altered breathing pattern; labored, irregular, apneic
- Seizures
- Altered level of consciousness
- Changes in tone in an infant
- Cardio-respiratory compromise
- Abnormal neurological exam

## Fractures

### High specificity for abuse

- Classic metaphyseal lesions
- Rib fractures, especially posterior
- Scapular fractures
- Spinous processes fractures
- Sternal fractures

### Moderate specificity for abuse

- Multiple, bilateral, symmetric
- Fractures of different ages
- Complex skull fractures
- Digital fractures
- Associated non-skeletal injury
- Fracture in a non-mobile child

Suspicion of inflicted injury?

Report to Child Protective Services

Transfer to  
PED1

This algorithm does not replace clinical judgment and is not intended to be prescriptive for all patients.

# 2021 Identification of Child Physical Abuse Clinical Guideline

**T** Trunk  
**E** Ears  
**N** Neck  
  
**4** 4 years or younger  
  
**F** Frenulum  
**A** Auricular area  
**C** Cheek  
**E** Eyes  
**S** Sclera  
**P** Patterned bruising



**4** Any bruising on a child less than 4 months



*\*Kids that don't cruise rarely bruise.\**

## Validation of a Clinical Decision Rule to Predict Abuse in Young Children Based on Bruising Characteristics

[Mary Clyde Pierce](#), MD,<sup>1,2</sup> [Kim Kaczor](#), MS,<sup>1</sup> [Douglas J. Lorenz](#), PhD,<sup>3</sup> [Gina Bertocci](#), PhD,<sup>4</sup> [Amanda K. Fingarson](#), DO,<sup>2,5</sup> [Kathi Makoroff](#), MD, MEd,<sup>6</sup> [Rachel P. Berger](#), MD, MPH,<sup>7</sup> [Berkeley Bennett](#), MD, MS,<sup>8,9</sup> [Julia Magana](#), MD,<sup>10,11</sup> [Shannon Staley](#), MD,<sup>12,13</sup> [Veena Ramaiah](#), MD,<sup>12</sup> [Kristine Fortin](#), MD,<sup>2,5,14</sup> [Melissa Currie](#), MD,<sup>15</sup> [Bruce E. Herman](#), MD,<sup>16</sup> [Sandra Herr](#), MD,<sup>17</sup> [Kent P. Hymel](#), MD,<sup>18</sup> [Carole Jenny](#), MD, MBA,<sup>19</sup> [Karen Sheehan](#), MD, MPH,<sup>1,2</sup> [Noel Zuckerbraun](#), MD, MPH,<sup>7</sup> [Sheila Hickey](#), MSW, MJ,<sup>20</sup> [Gabriel Meyers](#), MSW,<sup>8</sup> and [John M. Leventhal](#), MD<sup>21</sup>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8047759/>

This algorithm does not replace clinical judgment and is not intended to be prescriptive for all patients.