

Medical Evaluation for Suspected Physical Abuse

What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse:

- Is harm or the threat of harm to a child.
- Is done on purpose by a parent or other adult who is responsible for the child's welfare.
- Can include such injuries as bruising, burns, broken bones, head injury or internal injuries.

Why does my child need a medical evaluation?

Your child was referred to the Child Advocacy Center or Emergency Department at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW) for a medical evaluation. The referral was made due to concerns about your child's safety and physical well-being.

- When this happens, a report is normally made to Child Protective Services, the local police or Sheriff's Department. They then investigate the abuse concerns.
- Your child will have a medical evaluation to check for injuries and to treat any medical problems. A medical opinion may be needed to help tell if the injuries were:
 - done on purpose, or
 - accidents.

What happens during the evaluation?

This evaluation is very much like a regular check up. The medical staff will decide if a supportive parent or caretaker can be in the exam room.

- First, the medical provider takes a medical history.
- Then a head-to-toe check up is done.

Your child's skin is examined carefully. The provider looks for injuries, marks and bruises. If they are any, the doctor or nurse may ask your child, in a friendly and simple way, how the injury happened.

- The medical staff or hospital photographer may take photos of the injuries. These photos are an important part of the medical documents. They may be used in the child abuse investigation or for court purposes. They are not released from CHW for any other reasons.
- X-rays or other tests may be ordered. This may include blood tests to check for bleeding problems.

What happens after the evaluation?

- The medical staff will meet with you and others involved in your case. This will include the social worker and police officer (if present). They will discuss the evaluation and any safety concerns.
- An interview of your child may be recommended. It will be done by a social worker or police officer with special training in talking with children about possible abuse.
- Any need for more treatment or tests will be discussed and arranged.
- A referral for counseling may be made.
- A written report about the evaluation will be made. Investigators on the case will have access to the report. Your doctor will have access to the report as well. If it does not affect the child's safety, a parent or legal guardian can normally get a copy of the report. They can request it at the Health Information (Medical Records) Department at CHW.

ALERT: If you have any questions or concerns call the Child Advocacy Center at (414) 277-8980.

Doctor or Nurse Practitioner: _____ Social Worker: _____

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.