

## **Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect**

### Physical Abuse:

- Bruises or welts on the head or face in various stages of healing. Bruising on large areas of the torso, back buttocks, or thighs in unusual patterns or reflective of the instrument used to inflict them.
- Burns that are suggestive of a cigarette, or sock-like, or doughnut-shaped on the buttocks indicative of immersion in hot liquid.
- Fractures (skull, jaw, nasal, spiral of the long bones): fractures in various stages of healing, any fracture in a child under the age of two.
- Any injury inconsistent with the explanation provided.

### Neglect:

- Consistently hungry or inappropriately dressed for the weather.
- Young child without supervision for extended periods of time.
- Unattended and potentially health threatening physical/medical problems, including chronic non-compliance with medical regimen that results in serious risk to the child.

### Sexual Abuse:

- Pain or itching in the genital area.
- Bruises or bleeding in the external genitalia, vagina, or anal regions.
- Venereal disease.
- Swollen or red cervix, vulva.

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## **Indicators of Abuse of Elderly and Vulnerable Adults**

### General Guidelines:

#### Definition:

- Elderly – at least age 60
- Disabled – age 18 – 59

#### Suspicious History:

- Description of injury not congruent with medical findings.
- Patient has injuries not mentioned in history.
- History of similar injuries or inconsistent explanations of the occurrences.
- New patient with apparent history of “doctor hopping”.
- Patient is heavily dependent on an identified caregiver for personal or financial needs.
- Presence of substance abuse, mental illness or family violence involving caregiver or patient.
- Prolonged interval between injury and onset of symptoms and current request for care.

#### Ask the patient if he or she has experienced:

- Being shoved, shaken or hit.
- Being left alone, locked in a room or tied to a bed or chair.
- Being threatened by the caregiver or feeling afraid to discuss details of the relationship with the caregiver.
- Having money or property taken for forcibly signed over to a caretaker or others.

### Indicators of Partner Abuse

#### Reasons to Suspect:

- Injuries to face, neck, throat, chest, abdomen, and genitals.
- Evidence of sexual assault.
- Chronic pain.
- Injuries during pregnancy.
- Substantial delay between onset of injury and presentation for treatment.
- Multiple injuries in various stages of healing.
- Extent or type of injury inconsistent with patient's explanation.
- Repeated use of emergency room services and/or psychosomatic or emotional complaints.
- Suicidal ideation or suicide attempts.
- An overly attentive or aggressive partner accompanying the patient.

#### Assessment Questions:

- Is anyone in your family hitting you?
- Has anyone hit you while you were pregnant?
- Have you ever received medical attention for any abuse injuries?
- Does your partner ever threaten you?
- Does your partner ever threaten to hurt you when you disagree with him?
- Does your partner destroy things that you care about; *i.e.*, your family photographs, your clothes, pets?
- Are you forced to engage in sex that makes you uncomfortable?