
Suspicious Injuries:

Telling the Difference Between **Potential Abuse** and **Accidental Injury**

Accidents happen with everyone. If you're not sure if an injury was accidental or if it might be the result of abuse, you can ask yourself these questions!

How did it happen?

- If an injury is accidental, there should be a reasonable explanation of how it happened that makes sense with how the injury looks. The description of how the injury happened should make sense for that person's lifestyle.
- When the explanation and the injury don't seem to "make sense", there is cause for concern.

What's the location of the injury?

- Certain areas of the body are more likely to be injured from an accident (knees, hands, elbows, shins).
- Protected body parts and areas are less likely to accidentally come into contact with objects that could cause injury (back, genital area, buttocks, stomach, face).

What's the extent of the injury? (number and frequency of injuries)

- The more injuries there are, the greater the cause for concern. Unless the person is involved in a serious automobile accident, he/she is not likely to have many different injuries at the same time "accidentally".
- Multiple injuries in different stages of healing indicate abuse.
- What is the extent of the injury? (Is it one dime-sized bruise, or several similar bruises?)
- Is there a pattern to when the injuries happen? (Certain days of the week, or when the person spends time with someone in particular.)

What's the injury's size and shape?

- Is there a defined shape or pattern to the injury? (Many *non-accidental* injuries can be shaped like easily recognizable objects: a hanger, a hand, a belt, a hairbrush. The marks look a lot like the objects used.)
- Accidental marks resulting from bumps and falls usually have no defined shape.

Could a medical condition have caused the injury?

- Does the person have a new health issue, or take a new medication? Consider the importance of knowing the person you support!
- Has the person seen a doctor or medical professional?
- It's never up to you to "investigate" injuries or medical conditions; seek medical expertise.

REMEMBER:

If you're not sure, let DHI decide.