

Meningococcal disease

(See Fig. 15.11; see also <https://www.meningitis.org> and <https://www.nice.org.uk>)

Meningococcal disease is unpredictable. Most children present acutely febrile and may not have a rash in the early stages.

Septicaemia

Children presenting with septicaemia may have:

- A history of fever/rigors but be afebrile at the time of presentation.
- Isolated severe limb pain in the absence of any other physical signs.
- Abdominal pain, diarrhoea, and vomiting are common in septicaemia.
- Alertness until late in the illness.

Septic shock without meningitis at presentation has the worst prognosis.

Meningitis

Young children may present with fever, vomiting, irritability, and confusion. Those aged <2y are less likely to have neck stiffness or photophobia. Take parental concerns about a child's responsiveness and alertness seriously. Older children typically present more classically with fever, vomiting, headache, stiff neck, and photophobia. However, teenagers may present atypically with a change of behaviour (eg confusion, aggression), which may be falsely attributed to alcohol or drugs.

Rash

Underlying meningococcal disease may be very advanced by the time a rash appears. This may initially be blanching, macular, or maculopapular. Children without a rash or with a blanching rash can still have meningococcal disease. The classic rapidly evolving petechial or purpuric rash may be a very late sign and can carry a poor prognosis.

Urgent treatment and experienced help are essential. Perform CT scanning of the brain if there is impaired conscious level or focal neurological signs or signs of ↑ ICP. CT scans must not delay treatment. LP has no immediate role in ED care of the critically ill child and can be fatal. LP is contraindicated if there is extensive purpura, shock, impaired consciousness, coagulopathy, local infection, or ↑ ICP on CT or clinically.

Give antibiotics (IV ceftriaxone in children aged >3 months; IV cefotaxime + amoxicillin or ampicillin if aged <3 months) immediately to:

- All children with fever and petechial/purpuric rash.
- Children in shock with or without a rash.
- Children with clinical meningitis, but LP contraindicated.

Add vancomycin if the child has travelled outside the UK recently or has had prolonged or multiple exposure to antibiotics (in the past 3 months). If meningoencephalitis is suspected, give aciclovir.

Take any haemorrhagic rash in a febrile child very seriously. Although many children with fever and petechiae have viral illnesses, there is no room for complacency. Ensure that all have their vital signs measured and are carefully checked for signs of meningitis or septicaemia.

Airway and ventilation

Intubate and ventilate:

- If impaired conscious level or ↑ ICP clinically.
- Prior to CT scanning if critically ill.
- If fluid resuscitation requirement is >40mL/kg.

Seek expert help for rapid sequence induction/intubation (RSI)—haemodynamic collapse is common. Consider using IV ketamine for induction if experienced in its use.

Fluid resuscitation

Vast quantities of IV fluids are required in meningococcal septicaemia—often up to 100mL/kg. Some UK authorities recommend 4.5% human albumin solution (HAS) for fluid resuscitation, but give crystalloid (0.9% saline) if HAS is not immediately available.

Inotropes

- Dopamine or dobutamine at 10–20mcg/kg/min. Make up 3× weight (kg) mg in 50mL of 5% glucose and run at 10mL/hr (= 10mcg/kg/min).
- These dilute solutions can be used via a peripheral vein.
- Start adrenaline via a central line only (seek expert help) at 0.1mcg/kg/min. Make up 300mcg/kg in 50mL of saline at 1mL/hr (= 0.1mcg/kg/min).

Hypoglycaemia (glucose <3mmol/L)

A 10% glucose bolus 2mL/kg IV and then a glucose infusion at 80% of maintenance requirements over 24hr.

Correction of metabolic acidosis (pH <7.2)

Sodium bicarbonate (NaHCO_3) 1mmol/kg IV = 8.4% NaHCO_3 1mL/kg over 20min or 4.2% NaHCO_3 2mL/kg in neonates.

If $\text{K}^+ <3.5\text{mmol/L}$

Give potassium chloride 0.25mmol/kg IV diluted in saline or glucose over 30min, with ECG monitoring. Caution if anuric.

If total $\text{Ca}^{2+} <2\text{mmol/L}$ or ionized $\text{Ca}^{2+} <1.0\text{mmol/L}$

Give 10% calcium chloride (0.7mmol/mL) 0.1mL/kg over 30min IV (max 10mL) or 10% calcium gluconate (0.22mmol/mL) 0.3mL/kg over 30min (max 20mL).

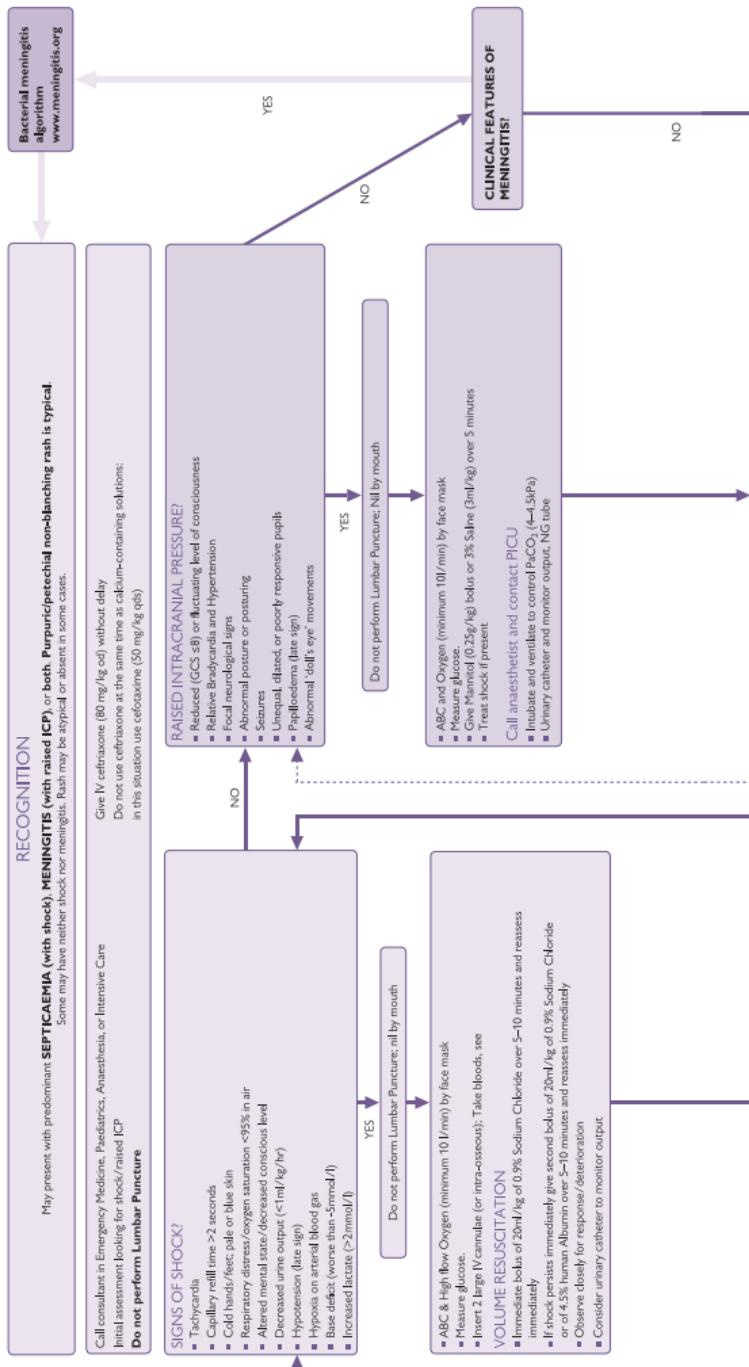
If $\text{Mg}^{2+} <0.75\text{mmol/L}$

Give 50% magnesium sulfate 0.2mL/kg IV over 30min (max 10mL).

Steroids in bacterial meningitis

NICE advises giving dexamethasone (0.15mg/kg to max of 10mg, qds for 4 days) for children aged >3 months with suspected or confirmed bacterial meningitis if LP reveals any of the following: frankly purulent CSF, CSF WCC >1000/microlitre, ↑ CSF WCC with protein concentration >1g/L, and bacteria on Gram stain.

Do not give steroids if TB meningitis is suspected.



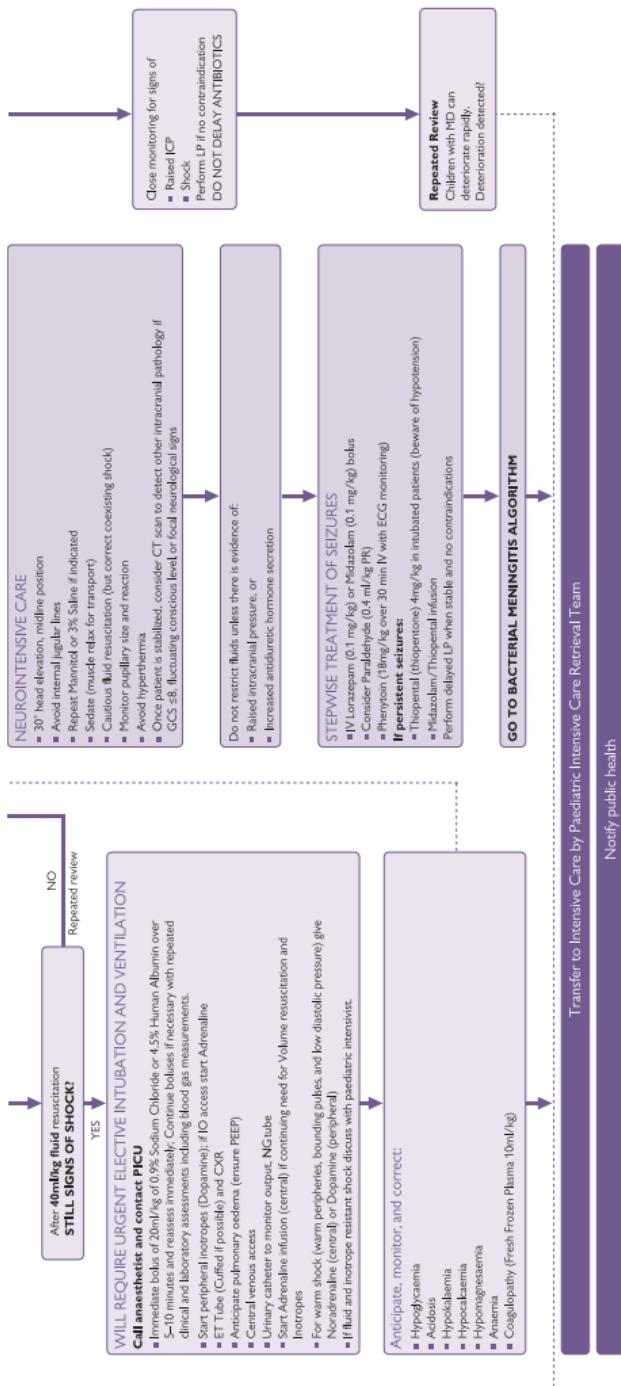


Fig. 15.11 Management of meningococcal disease in children and young people. Take blood for glucose, FBC, coagulation screen, U&E, Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺, PO₄³⁻, blood cultures, ABG, lactate, cross-match, and PCR for *Neisseria meningitidis*.

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Lumbar puncture

In the context of infectious disease, an LP can help to confirm a diagnosis of meningitis and to identify the organism responsible and its antibiotic sensitivities.

Contraindications to LP

If LP is performed in the presence of significantly ↑ ICP, there is a risk of 'coning' occurring. Take senior advice before performing an LP. The following are contraindications to performing an LP:

- Prolonged or focal seizure.
- Focal neurological signs.
- Purpuric rash.
- GCS <13/15.
- Pupillary dilatation.
- Impaired oculocephalic reflexes.
- Bradycardia.
- Coagulopathy and/or low platelets.
- Papilloedema.

Performing an LP

- Confirm that there is no contraindication.
- Prepare the parents, set up the equipment, and enlist help from an experienced nurse.
- Position the child to be lying curled up into a ball, lying on the side (see Fig. 15.12).
- Mark the skin with a pen in the midline at the level of the iliac crests.
- Scrub and don a sterile gown and gloves.
- Clean the skin with antiseptic solution, and cover with sterile drapes.
- Consider LA for the skin using 1% lidocaine solution.
- Slowly insert the 21G LP needle, aiming towards the umbilicus.
- If this causes much pain, withdraw the needle and use more lidocaine LA (but <3mg/kg—see  Analgesia in specific situations, pp. 290–1.)
- If no CSF is obtained, withdraw the needle and reassess its direction, then try again.
- Collect four drops of CSF in each of three bottles and send for: microscopy and Gram staining, culture, and sensitivity; cell counts, glucose, and protein; and PCR.
- If a bloody tap is obtained, send the clearest sample for cell count analysis.



Fig. 15.12 Positioning for a lumbar puncture.

Skin lesions in multisystem disease

The appearance of the skin may provide a valuable clue to an underlying disease process. If suspected, refer all of the following diseases to a paediatrician.

Kawasaki disease (mucocutaneous lymph node syndrome)

This disease, believed to be related to a viral infection, was first reported in Japan in 1967 and has now spread worldwide. It is not contagious.

Most cases affect children aged <5y. Fever is often the first symptom and this usually lasts ≥5 days. Extensive skin and mucosal changes occur, including an erythematous rash, which may affect the palms and soles and desquamate. Conjunctivitis, uveitis, fissured lips, and a strawberry tongue may be seen. Other features include acute cervical lymphadenopathy, arthritis, and diarrhoea.

Coronary artery aneurysm (and subsequent thrombosis) is a significant complication, but the risk of this developing is ↓ for children who receive treatment (IV immunoglobulin), underlining the importance of making the diagnosis.

If Kawasaki disease is suspected, check FBC, ESR, and viral titres, and refer to a paediatrician.

Dermatitis herpetiformis

This is the skin manifestation of coeliac disease. Vesicles and papules occur over the knees, elbows, and buttocks. The lesions are very itchy and produce much scratching. Dapsone is effective treatment—refer to a paediatrician.

Erythema multiforme

Target lesions, often with pale, blistered centres, are symmetrically distributed, particularly over the extensor surfaces of the limbs, sometimes including the hands and feet. The skin lesions, combined with fever, systemic illness, and oral and genital ulceration, comprise the Stevens–Johnson syndrome.

Causes Include infection (herpes, *Mycoplasma*, TB) and drugs (sulfonamides, barbiturates).

Erythema nodosum

Painful red skin nodules or plaques on the anterior surfaces of both shins may be associated with fever, lethargy, and arthralgia. Erythema nodosum may occur in children and adults at any age but is most common between the ages of 12 and 25y. It may be due to streptococcal infection, TB, sulfonamides, ulcerative colitis, or sarcoid. Sometimes, no cause is found. If suspected, refer to the paediatric team for investigation and follow-up.

Erythema marginatum

A transient erythematous rash with raised edges occurs in 20% of cases of *rheumatic fever* (see *Rheumatic fever*, p. 513). *Rheumatic fever* is an autoimmune disease which follows infection with group A streptococci. Once common, it is now unusual in the UK.

Diagnose using the revised Duckett–Jones criteria (two or more major, or one major and two minor, plus evidence of preceding streptococcal infection, eg throat swab, ↑ anti-streptolysin O titre):

Major criteria Erythema marginatum, carditis, polyarthritis, Sydenham's chorea, subcutaneous nodules.

Minor criteria Fever, arthralgia, ↑ ESR, ↑ WCC, previous rheumatic fever, prolonged PR interval.

Erythema (chronicum) migrans

(See *Infestations*, pp. 240–1.)

The characteristic skin rash of *Lyme disease* begins as a red papule, which spreads to produce erythematous lesions with pale centres and bright edges. *Lyme disease* is a multisystem disorder resulting from tick-borne infection. It initially manifests with one or more of a variety of symptoms, including fever, headache, malaise, arthralgia, and myalgia. The rash is present in most cases. The diagnosis can be elusive, but consider it if there has been any history of travel to an affected area.

Identifying skin lesions

(See Table 15.4.)

Description

- Impalpable coloured lesion <1cm diameter = macule.
- Impalpable coloured lesion >1cm diameter = patch.
- Palpable lump <0.5cm diameter = papule.
- Palpable lump >0.5cm diameter = nodule.
- Palpable fluid-filled lesion <0.5cm diameter = vesicle.
- Palpable fluid-filled lesion >0.5cm diameter = bulla.

Table 15.4 Skin lesions and possible causes

Feature	Causes
Peeling skin	Toxic epidermal necrolysis ('scalded skin syndrome'), Kawasaki disease Streptococcal infection
Blistering lesions	<i>Staphylococcus</i> (impetigo and toxic epidermal necrolysis), scabies, chickenpox, herpes zoster, herpes simplex, Stevens–Johnson, pompholyx, Coxsackie A16 (hand, foot, and mouth disease), dermatitis herpetiformis, epidermolysis bullosa, drugs
Lesions on palms and soles	Coxsackie A16, Kawasaki disease, erythema multiforme, scabies, pompholyx
Pruritus	Eczema, urticaria, psoriasis, chickenpox, scabies, lice, insect bites, dermatitis herpetiformis

Paediatric ENT problems

Background

Due to frequent infections and large concentrations of active lymphoid tissue, certain ENT problems are very common in general and paediatric practice. For example, acute suppurative otitis media (see  Earache, pp. 566–7) has an incidence of 20% amongst preschool children; secretory otitis media ('glue ear') has a prevalence of 5% amongst all children. Rhinorrhoea from coryza and rhinitis is even more common.

Approach

Although many ENT diseases are usually considered as primary care problems, children often present to the ED suffering from them. It is obviously important to examine the ears and throat of any child presenting with a fever. Remember, however, that the ill, septic child with large red tonsils may also have a significant septic focus elsewhere (eg meningitis or pneumonia).

Examination

Examination of the ears and throat is generally disliked by children and, as a result, can sometimes prove to be rather a struggle to undertake. It is therefore sensible to leave this part of the full examination of a child until last. Help from parents can be invaluable in enabling examination of the slightly unco-operative toddler or younger child. Sit the child on a parent's lap for examination of the ears and throat, as shown in Fig. 15.13.

The difficult examination

Despite attempting a variety of manoeuvres, it can be very difficult to adequately visualize the throat of a child who adamantly refuses to open their mouth. A useful trick is to draw the face of a 'Smiley Man' on the end of a wooden spatula. The child may then consent to the 'Smiley Man' having a look at their throat (preferably with the ink side up!).

Presentation and treatment

The presentation, diagnosis, and treatment of specific ENT diseases in both children and adults are described in  Chapter 12.

- See  Ear, nose, and throat foreign bodies, pp. 562–3.
- See  Earache, pp. 566–7.
- See  Epistaxis, p. 568.
- See  Nasal fracture, p. 569.
- See  Sore throat, pp. 570–1.

Examining a child's ear In an infant, pull the pinna back and down (rather than up) for the best view.



Fig. 15.13 Examining a child's ear and throat.

Stridor: upper respiratory infections

The upper airway may be blocked by: distortion (eg tongue falling back in coma), extrinsic compression (eg haematoma), swelling of its wall (eg burns, croup, epiglottitis, diphtheria), or FB within (see Table 15.5).

- *Signs of upper airway obstruction:* stridor, marked dyspnoea, drowsiness, subcostal/suprasternal recession, drooling of saliva, difficulty speaking, and cyanosis. Any of these warn of impending obstruction.
- *Stridor* is a high-pitched inspiratory noise. It occurs in croup, acute epiglottitis, inhaled FB, laryngeal trauma, laryngomalacia ('congenital laryngeal stridor'), and angioneurotic oedema.

Acute croup (laryngotracheobronchitis)

Viral (para-influenza in >80%) and common between 6 months and 5y. Spring and autumn epidemics occur. Illness lasts ~3–5 days. Coryzal symptoms usually precede harsh stridor, a barking cough ('seal's bark'), with hoarseness ↑ over several days. T° is only mildly ↑. Leave the child in a comfortable position, preferably in the arms of a parent, who can hold an O₂ mask near the child. Look for signs of significant airway obstruction, but do not examine the pharynx as this may precipitate laryngospasm or obstruction. If any signs are present, or if SpO₂ is <92% on air, refer urgently—intubation may be required. Use the modified Westley croup score by adding individual values as follows:

- *Stridor:* none = 0, only when upset or agitated = 1, at rest = 2.
- *Retractions:* mild = 1, moderate = 2, severe = 3.
- *Air entry:* normal = 0, mild ↓ = 1, marked ↓ = 2.
- *SpO₂ <92% on air:* none = 0, with agitation = 4, at rest = 5.
- *Level of consciousness:* normal = 0, altered conscious level = 5.

Admit moderate (score 3–5) or severe (score 6–11) croup or impending respiratory failure (score >11).

Give dexamethasone 0.15mg/kg PO or, if vomiting or severe respiratory distress, nebulized budesonide (2mg in 5mL of 0.9% saline). If severe (score >5), give nebulized adrenaline driven by O₂ at 8L/min (0.4mL/kg of 1:1000, max 5mL; repeat as required). Refer severe cases to PICU (<1% of croup is severe).

Consider discharging mild croup (score 0–2) from the ED after a brief period of observation—let an experienced clinician decide. Discharge in the evening may be inadvisable, as croup can worsen overnight.

Diphtheria

Although rare in the UK, the exotoxin of *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* may produce serious organ damage (especially myocarditis) and upper respiratory tract obstruction. The non-immunized child may present with pyrexia, sore throat, and dysphagia due to an adherent pharyngeal exudate. Cervical lymphadenopathy causes a 'bull neck' appearance. (Note that infectious mononucleosis may present similarly—see  Infectious mononucleosis (glandular fever), p. 231.)

Treat With O₂, obtain ECG and venous access, send blood for FBC and blood culture, and obtain a throat swab. Refer for antitoxin (20,000U IM after a test dose) and IV antibiotics (eg erythromycin).

Acute epiglottitis

Increasingly uncommon, due to widespread Hib vaccination. Rapidly progressive airway obstruction may result. Children aged 2–7y are most usually involved, although it can affect older children and adults. Unlike croup, stridor is usually soft and may even be absent. Onset is typically acute. The child is systemically unwell with pyrexia $>38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$, but little or no cough. In severe cases, the child may be ominously quiet and unable to speak, sitting upright drooling saliva in a ‘sniffing position’.

Management Do not try to visualize the throat as this may precipitate total airway obstruction. Let the child adopt the most comfortable position; give humidified O_2 and call urgently for anaesthetic and ENT help. Nebulized adrenaline (0.4mL/kg of 1:1000, max 5mL) may ‘buy time’. Defer blood tests (FBC, blood cultures) and treatment with IV cefotaxime until an anaesthetist has assessed the child. Lateral neck X-rays are unnecessary and potentially hazardous. Intubation, if required, may be very difficult to perform. A safe approach is for an experienced anaesthetist to use a gaseous induction in the presence of a surgeon who is prepared for a surgical airway. Airway swelling may require a smaller than expected diameter (and thus uncut) ET tube. If visualization of the tracheal orifice is difficult at laryngoscopy due to oedema, ask an assistant to squeeze the chest and look for an air bubble emerging from the trachea.

Loss of the airway If this happens, summon help and attempt to ventilate with O_2 using a bag and mask. If ventilation proves impossible, obtain a surgical airway (needle cricothyroidotomy if <12 y, surgical cricothyroidotomy if ≥ 12 y—see  Airway obstruction: surgical airway, p. 336).

Bacterial tracheitis

May be due to *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus*, or *Haemophilus influenzae*. The presentation of ‘croup’, plus moderate/severe pyrexia and production of copious secretions, suggests the diagnosis. If suspected, refer and treat as for acute epiglottitis (intubation is often required). Bacterial tracheitis can cause rapid onset of septic shock.

Table 15.5 Clinical presentations of upper airway obstruction

	Croup	Epiglottitis	Bacterial tracheitis	FB
Age	1–2y	2–6y	Throughout childhood	Throughout childhood
Onset	1–2 days	<24hr	<24hr	<24hr
History	Coryza, barking cough	Sore throat, dysphagia	Rattling cough, sore throat	
Signs	$T^{\circ} <38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$, non-toxic, harsh stridor, hoarseness	$T^{\circ} >38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$, toxic, upright position	$T^{\circ} >38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$, toxic, mucopurulent secretions, soft/absent stridor	Afebrile, non-toxic

Severe acute asthma in children

Assess

Conscious level, degree of breathlessness, degree of agitation, use of accessory muscles, amount of wheezing, pulse rate, and RR. Attempt to measure peak flow if age >5y (see Fig. 15.14 for normal peak flow).

Follow the 2019 BTS/SIGN guidelines based on age and severity (<https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk>). Investigations, including blood gas estimations, rarely alter immediate management.

Cautions

Children with severe asthma attacks may not appear distressed. Wheeze and RR correlate poorly with severity of airway obstruction. ↑ tachycardia denotes worsening asthma, and a fall in heart rate in life-threatening asthma is pre-terminal.

Assessment in the very young (<2y) may be difficult—get expert help.

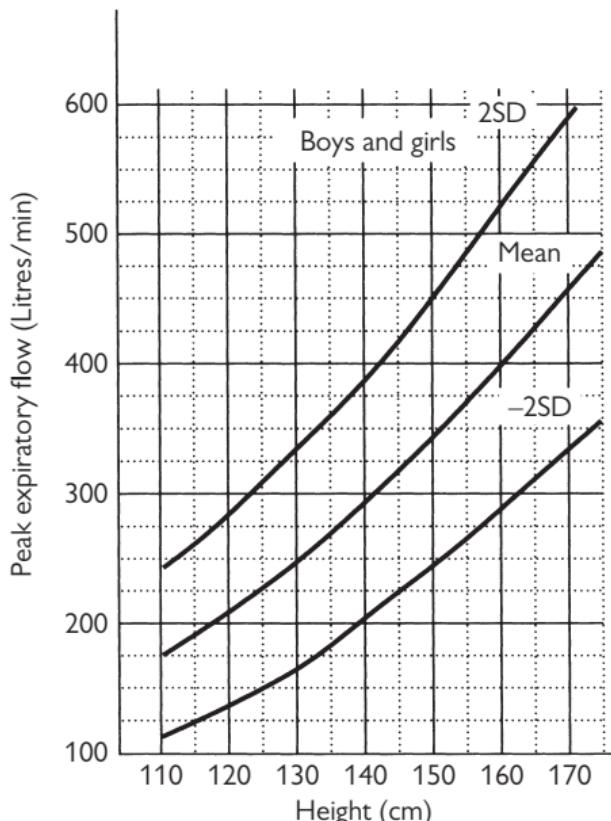


Fig. 15.14 Normal peak expiratory flow in children aged 5–18y.

Management of acute asthma in children aged >2y

(See Figs 15.15 and 15.16.)

- Summon senior ED/PICU/paediatric help if asthma is severe.
- Provide high-flow O₂ via a face mask (or nasal cannulae).
- Give an inhaled β-agonist. In mild or moderate asthma, use a metered-dose inhaler with a spacer, and 2–10 puffs of salbutamol.
- In severe or life-threatening asthma, use an O₂-powered nebulizer with salbutamol 2.5–5mg or terbutaline 5–10mg.
- Give oral prednisolone (20mg for children aged 2–5y; 30–40mg if aged >5y). If already taking maintenance steroids, give 2mg/kg (max 60mg). In children who vomit, give IV hydrocortisone 4mg/kg.
- Add ipratropium bromide 0.25mg if there is poor initial response to nebulized β-agonist.
- Repeat β-agonist and ipratropium every 20min up to 2hr as needed.
- Consider salbutamol (15mcg/kg) given IV over 10min in severe cases with a poor response to initial nebulized salbutamol and ipratropium bromide. Refer to PICU urgently and check K⁺ levels.
- Consider an IVI of magnesium sulfate 40mg/kg over 20min.
- Aminophylline is not recommended in children with mild to moderate asthma. In severe or life-threatening asthma unresponsive to maximal doses of bronchodilators and systemic steroids, take specialist advice and consider IV aminophylline (5mg/kg over 20min; maintenance IVI at 1mg/kg/hr; omit loading dose if already receiving oral theophyllines).
- Do not give ‘routine’ antibiotics.

Note: if possible, repeat and record peak flow 15–30min after starting treatment. If the patient is not improving, give further nebulized β-agonist. Pulse oximetry is helpful in assessing response to treatment. An SpO₂ of ≤92% on air after initial bronchodilator therapy usually indicates the need for more intensive inpatient care usually in PICU. CXR is indicated for severe dyspnoea, focal chest signs, or signs of severe infection.

Consider the need for anaesthesia/intubation/IPPV and PICU transfer

- Deteriorating peak flow or worsening or persistent hypoxia or normal/↑ pCO₂ levels on ABG.
- Exhaustion, feeble respiratory effort, confusion, or drowsiness.
- Coma or respiratory arrest.

Management of acute asthma in children aged <2y

Assessing acute asthma in early childhood is difficult—get specialist help (see  <https://www.sign.ac.uk>). Intermittent wheezing attacks are usually due to viral infection. Differential diagnosis includes: aspiration and other pneumonias, bronchiolitis, tracheomalacia, and complications of underlying conditions (eg congenital abnormalities, cystic fibrosis). If there is no response to inhaled bronchodilators, review the diagnosis:

- Use a metered-dose inhaler with a spacer to give β-agonist therapy.
- Consider systemic steroids early in the management of moderate to severe asthma in infants (10mg of soluble prednisolone).
- Consider adding inhaled ipratropium bromide (0.25mg) to inhaled β-agonists for more severe symptoms.

Age 2–5 years**ASSESS AND RECORD ASTHMA SEVERITY****Moderate asthma**

- $\text{SpO}_2 \geq 92\%$
- Able to talk
- Heart rate $\leq 140/\text{min}$
- Respiratory rate $\leq 40/\text{min}$

Acute severe asthma

- $\text{SpO}_2 < 92\%$
- Too breathless to talk
- Heart rate $> 140/\text{min}$
- Respiratory rate $> 40/\text{min}$
- Use of accessory neck muscles

Life-threatening asthma

- $\text{SpO}_2 < 92\%$ plus any of:
- Silent chest
- Poor respiratory effort
- Agitation
- Confusion
- Cyanosis

- β_2 bronchodilator:
 - via spacer \pm facemask
- Consider oral prednisolone 20mg

- Oxygen via facemask to maintain SpO_2 94–98% if available

- β_2 bronchodilator
 - via nebulizer (preferably oxygen-driven), salbutamol 2.5mg
 - or, if nebulizer not available, via spacer
- Oral prednisolone 20mg

- β_2 bronchodilator with ipratropium:
 - via nebulizer (preferably oxygen-driven), salbutamol 2.5mg and ipratropium 0.25mg every 20 minutes
 - or, if nebulizer and ipratropium not available, β_2 bronchodilator via spacer
- Oral prednisolone 20mg or IV hydrocortisone 50mg if vomiting

**Assess response to treatment
15 mins after β_2 bronchodilator**

**IF POOR RESPONSE
ARRANGE ADMISSION****IF POOR RESPONSE REPEAT
 β_2 BRONCHODILATOR AND
ARRANGE ADMISSION****REPEAT β_2 BRONCHODILATOR
VIA OXYGEN-DRIVEN
NEBULIZER WHILST
ARRANGING IMMEDIATE
HOSPITAL ADMISSION****GOOD RESPONSE**

- Continue β_2 bronchodilator via spacer or nebulizer, as needed but not exceeding 4 hourly
- **If symptoms are not controlled repeat β_2 bronchodilator and refer to hospital**
- Continue prednisolone until recovery (minimum 3–5 days)
- Arrange follow-up clinic visit within 48 hours
- Consider referral to secondary care asthma clinic if second attack within 12 months.

POOR RESPONSE

- Stay with patient until ambulance arrives
- Send written assessment and referral details
- Repeat β_2 bronchodilator via oxygen-driven nebulizer in ambulance

LOWER THRESHOLD FOR ADMISSION IF:

- Attack in late afternoon or at night
- Recent hospital admission or previous severe attack
- Concern over social circumstances or ability to cope at home

NB: If a patient has signs and symptoms across categories, always treat according to their most severe features

Fig. 15.15 Management of acute asthma in 2–5y olds (see: <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk> and <https://www.sign.ac.uk>).

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Age >5 years**ASSESS AND RECORD ASTHMA SEVERITY****Moderate asthma**

- $\text{SpO}_2 \geq 92\%$
- Able to talk
- Heart rate $\leq 125/\text{min}$
- Respiratory rate $\leq 30/\text{min}$
- PEF $\geq 50\%$ best or predicted

Acute severe asthma

- $\text{SpO}_2 \geq 92\%$
- Too breathless to talk
- Heart rate $>125/\text{min}$
- Respiratory rate $>30/\text{min}$
- Use of accessory neck muscles
- PEF 33–50% best or predicted

Life-threatening asthma

- $\text{SpO}_2 < 92\%$ plus any of:
- Silent chest
- Poor respiratory effort
- Agitation
- Confusion
- Cyanosis
- PEF $< 33\%$ best or predicted

- β_2 bronchodilator:
 - via spacer
- Consider oral prednisolone 30–40mg

- Oxygen via facemask to maintain SpO_2 94–98% if available

- β_2 bronchodilator
 - via nebulizer (preferably oxygen-driven), salbutamol 2.5mg
 - or, if nebulizer not available, via spacer
- Oral prednisolone 30–40mg

**Assess response to treatment
15 mins after β_2 bronchodilator**

- β_2 bronchodilator with ipratropium:
 - via nebulizer (preferably oxygen-driven), salbutamol 2.5mg and ipratropium 0.25mg every 20 minutes
 - or, if nebulizer and ipratropium not available, β_2 bronchodilator via spacer
- Oral prednisolone 30–40mg or IV hydrocortisone 100mg if vomiting

**IF POOR RESPONSE
ARRANGE ADMISSION****IF POOR RESPONSE REPEAT
 β_2 BRONCHODILATOR AND
ARRANGE ADMISSION****REPEAT β_2 BRONCHODILATOR
VIA OXYGEN-DRIVEN
NEBULIZER WHILST
ARRANGING IMMEDIATE
HOSPITAL ADMISSION****GOOD RESPONSE**

- Continue β_2 bronchodilator via spacer or nebulizer, as needed but not exceeding 4 hourly
- **If symptoms are not controlled repeat β_2 bronchodilator and refer to hospital**
- Continue prednisolone until recovery (minimum 3–5 days)
- Arrange follow-up clinic visit within 48 hours
- Consider referral to secondary care asthma clinic if 2nd attack within 12 months.

POOR RESPONSE

- Stay with patient until ambulance arrives
- Send written assessment and referral details
- Repeat β_2 bronchodilator via oxygen-driven nebulizer in ambulance

LOWER THRESHOLD FOR ADMISSION IF:

- Attack in late afternoon or at night
- Recent hospital admission or previous severe attack
- Concern over social circumstances or ability to cope at home

NB: If a patient has signs and symptoms across categories, always treat according to their most severe features

Fig. 15.16 Management of acute asthma in children aged >5y (see: <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk> and <https://www.sign.ac.uk>).

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Acute bronchiolitis

Viral infection of the small airways results in inflammation, oedema, and excessive secretions, presenting with signs of obstructive airways disease. Acute bronchiolitis is common, particularly in the winter months and predominantly involves infants (typically 3–6 months). Those at particular risk are the very young (aged <6 weeks), the premature (born <35 weeks), and those with chronic respiratory conditions, congenital heart disease, immunodeficiency, or neurological problems. Parental smoking ↑ the risk of bronchiolitis. Breastfeeding for >2 months appears to have a protective effect. Most infants recover completely within 2 weeks.

Agents responsible

75% are caused by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Other causes include influenza, para-influenza, and adeno- and enteroviruses.

Presentation

Coryza, rhinorrhoea, and mild fever progress to respiratory distress with dyspnoea, dry cough, feeding difficulties, and wheeze (variable). Some children may present with apnoea. Inspection may reveal cyanosis, dehydration, tachypnoea (>50/min), nasal flaring, grunting, and subcostal and intercostal recession. The chest is usually visibly hyperinflated in bronchiolitis. There may be tachycardia and prolonged expiration (\pm wheeze), with fine end-inspiratory crepitations.

Complications

These include feeding difficulties, apnoeic spells, and respiratory failure (hence, adopt a low threshold for admission). Secondary bacterial infection can occur but is uncommon. Long-term airway damage may occasionally occur (obliterative bronchiolitis).

Investigations

- Apply a pulse oximeter, and check the pulse and CRT.
- Do not do routine blood tests unless the infant is febrile or an alternative diagnosis, such as pneumonia or sepsis, is more likely.
- Consider CXR and ABG/capillary gas only for those with progressive, atypical, or severe illness. Do not obtain a CXR routinely.
- Fluorescent antibody tests on nasopharyngeal aspirate to demonstrate the presence of RSV are recommended; these help with cohorting and isolation arrangements on the wards (see  Avoiding cross-infection, p. 699), particularly during the annual epidemic season in winter.
- Assess feeding difficulties by offering a bottle feed.

CXR Shows hyperinflation, with downward displacement of the diaphragm due to small airway obstruction and gas trapping. There may also be collapse or consolidation (usually upper lobe) or perihilar infiltrates hard to distinguish from pneumonia.

Differential diagnoses for bronchiolitis Include congenital heart disease, asthma, pneumonia, cystic fibrosis, inhaled FB, and septicaemia.

Treatment

(See NICE guideline, published in 2015, available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk>)

Emergency treatment is largely supportive, comprising one or more of:

- Providing humidified O_2 if SpO_2 is <92%.
- Performing nasal suctioning if the presentation is with apnoea.
- Ensuring adequate hydration—give fluid by NG or orogastric tube if unable to take enough PO; give IV fluid if unable to tolerate NG or orogastric fluids or there is impending respiratory failure.
- Calling for expert help and considering CPAP for impending respiratory failure.

Do not give antibiotics for bronchiolitis, but consider for severe illness suggestive of coexisting pneumonia or septicaemia. There is no benefit from using ipratropium, salbutamol, montelukast, PO or inhaled steroids, or nebulized adrenaline—do not use these therapies in acute bronchiolitis.

Hospital admission/discharge

Refer for admission all infants with respiratory distress, feeding difficulties (50–75% of usual fluid intake in previous 24hr), SpO_2 <94% on air, apnoeic episodes, or dehydration. When considering discharge, consider the family and social situation and the ability of parents to be able to identify and respond to deterioration. Provide advice to parents of children being discharged on how to recognize deterioration (eg apnoea, cyanosis, ↑ work of breathing/exhaustion, fluid intake ↓ to 50–75% of usual, or no wet nappy for 12hr) and how to seek help if needed.

PICU referral and ventilatory support

This is indicated for those with recurrent apnoea, persistent acidosis with pH <7.25, infants with ↓ conscious level, poor chest wall movement, and low SpO_2 (<92%) despite FiO_2 >60%, and those with hypercapnia.

Avoiding cross-infection

This is important during epidemics. Ensure all persons entering a cubicle containing a child with bronchiolitis clean their hands before and after seeing the patient, and use gloves and plastic aprons.

Prevention

Palivizumab is a humanized monoclonal RSV antibody, which is used as a prophylactic agent to reduce the severity of RSV disease in at-risk infants. It can be considered for use on a case-by-case basis in infants who:

- Were born prematurely (<35 weeks' gestation).
- Have acyanotic congenital heart disease.
- Have chronic lung disease.
- Have severe congenital immunodeficiency.

Infants are selected for this treatment by a local lead paediatric specialist.

Whooping coughND

Caused by *Bordetella pertussis*, whooping cough is a notifiable disease, with an incubation period of 5–14 days (see  Incubation periods, pp. 228–9). It is common (particularly in autumn) in children not immunized against it. A similar disease may also occur with other viral infections (*Bordetella parapertussis* and adenoviruses).

Presentation

Coryza is followed by ↑ cough (typically worse at night and tending to occur in bouts, often culminating in vomiting). Severe coughing bouts may result in conjunctival haemorrhages. The characteristic ‘whoop’ is an inspiratory noise produced after a coughing bout. It is not present in all infants with whooping cough. The cough may persist for several weeks.

Complications

Illness is often prolonged. There is a risk of neurological damage and bronchiectasis. Infants are at particular risk of death from apnoeic episodes.

Investigation

Take cultures by nasopharyngeal/per nasal swabs. Send blood for viral titres, *Mycoplasma* antibodies, and FBC (usually reveals markedly ↑ lymphocytes). CXR may be normal or show a ‘shaggy’ right heart border.

Treatment

(See NICE CKS, available at:  <https://cks.nice.org.uk>)

Criteria for admission

- Infants aged <6 months (due to risk of apnoea).
- Significant breathing problems (apnoeic episodes, cyanosis, or severe paroxysms).
- Other complications (eg seizures, pneumonia).

Management of those discharged

If the child is fit for discharge, inform the infectious diseases consultant and prescribe a 7-day course of PO clarithromycin, provided the onset of the cough was within the past 21 days. Suggest simple analgesics (paracetamol or ibuprofen). Advise that children should be kept off school or nursery until 48hr of antibiotics have been taken (or until 21 days after onset of symptoms if not treated). Explain that even with treatment, whooping cough is likely to result in a prolonged (non-infectious) cough, lasting for several weeks. Arrange GP follow-up, and give PO clarithromycin as prophylaxis to unimmunized infant siblings.

Prevention

Encourage immunization.

Pulmonary tuberculosisND

TB is being seen increasingly frequently again (see Tuberculosis, p. 242). It is more common in visitors from overseas or in HIV +ve children. TB may present in a variety of ways in children: persistent cough and fever, growth retardation, meningitis, pleural effusion, monoarticular arthritis, lymphadenopathy, back pain, and hepatosplenomegaly.

Investigations CXR.

Treatment Refer suspected cases for specialist evaluation, including Mantoux (0.1mL of intradermal tuberculin), and treatment.

Cystic fibrosis

Recurrent respiratory infections in neonates and infants raise the possibility of cystic fibrosis, tracheo-oesophageal fistula, cleft palate, or a defect in immunity. Cystic fibrosis is an autosomal recessive disorder, affecting 1 in 2000 children. It may present neonatally with meconium ileus or later with respiratory infections (\pm finger clubbing), failure to thrive, rectal prolapse, and steatorrhoea. Once diagnosed, a child will remain closely monitored and treated by both the GP and a specialist cystic fibrosis respiratory team. Involve this team at an early stage if a child with cystic fibrosis presents with respiratory infection.



Fig. 15.17 CXR of an infant with right upper lobe consolidation.

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is relatively common at all ages throughout childhood, but the infective agents likely to be responsible vary considerably (see Table 15.6). Viruses are most commonly found as a cause in younger children. In older children, when a bacterial cause is found, it is most commonly *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.

Table 15.6 Infective agents responsible for pneumonia

Age	Common causes
Neonates	<i>Escherichia coli</i> , β-haemolytic <i>Streptococcus</i> , <i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i> , <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> , CMV
Infants and toddlers	RSV, para-influenza viruses, <i>S. pneumoniae</i> , <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> , <i>Mycoplasma</i>
Older children	<i>S. pneumoniae</i> , <i>H. influenzae</i> , <i>Mycoplasma</i>

Symptoms

Often an URTI is followed by ↑ fever, cough, dyspnoea, lethargy, feeding difficulties, and dehydration. Pleuritic chest pain, abdominal pain, and neck stiffness may occur.

The combination of headache, abdominal pain, maculopapular rash, and joint pains suggests *Mycoplasma* infection.

Signs

- The child is usually dyspnoeic, pyrexial, and unwell.
- Classic signs of consolidation (see ↗ Pneumonia, pp. 114–15) are often absent, especially in infants and younger children (so if suspected, adopt a lower threshold for obtaining a CXR).
- Look for evidence of dehydration and of infection elsewhere (including the ears and throat).
- If wheeze is present in a preschool child, bacterial pneumonia is unlikely, although it does occur occasionally with mycobacteria in older children.

Investigations

- Check SpO₂.
- Take throat swabs.
- Obtain blood samples for FBC, cultures, viral titres, and *Mycoplasma* antibodies.
- CXR may demonstrate widespread bronchopneumonia or lobar consolidation (see Fig. 15.17)—there may be an accompanying pleural effusion. The presence of cavitation suggests staphylococcal pneumonia or TB.

Treatment

- If SpO_2 is <93%, give O_2 .
- Treat dehydration with IV fluids.
- Refer for admission and antibiotics—PO is often sufficient.
- IPPV is rarely required.

ICU treatment

Refer to ICU those children who have one or more of:

- Inability to maintain SpO_2 >93% with 60% O_2 .
- Signs of shock.
- ↑ RR/pulse rate with respiratory distress and exhaustion.
- Slow, irregular breathing or recurrent apnoea.

Choice of antibiotic

This depends upon the likely infective agent and local/national protocols (see BTS guidelines, available at  <https://www.brit-thoracic.org.uk>, see also Box 15.2).

Box 15.2 Antibiotic treatment for suspected bacterial pneumonia

Uncomplicated community-acquired pneumonia

- Neonate: benzylpenicillin and gentamicin.
- Neonate and child under 6 months: cefuroxime or co-amoxiclav (or benzylpenicillin if lobar pneumonia or *S. pneumoniae* suspected).
- Child 6 months to 5y: PO amoxicillin or PO clarithromycin.
- Child 5–18y: PO clarithromycin (or PO amoxicillin if *S. pneumoniae* suspected).

Add flucloxacillin if *Staphylococcus* is suspected, eg in influenza or measles. Use clarithromycin if atypical pathogens are suspected or penicillin allergy.

Severe community-acquired pneumonia of unknown aetiology

- Neonate: benzylpenicillin and gentamicin.
- 1 month to 18y: cefuroxime or co-amoxiclav (or benzylpenicillin if lobar pneumonia or *S. pneumoniae* suspected).

Use clarithromycin if atypical pathogens, such as *Mycoplasma* (more common in children over 5y) or *Chlamydia*, are suspected or penicillin allergy. Add flucloxacillin if *Staphylococcus* is suspected.

Fits in children

A careful history is crucial and may take some time to piece together. Epileptic fits may take many forms:

Grand mal (tonic/clonic) Loss of consciousness and shaking of all limbs.

Petit mal ('absences') Child pauses in speech or other activity and is unaware of episode.

Focal fit Involves one part of body (progression to grand mal = Jacksonian march).

Myoclonic fit May be violent and includes drop attacks.

Infantile spasm (Salaam attack) May involve truncal flexion and cause a fall.

Temporal lobe epilepsy Numerous bizarre presentations.

The fitting patient

(See  Status epilepticus, p. 705.)

The child who is still fitting on arrival to hospital is likely to have had a prolonged fit, so provide immediate attention:

- Give O₂.
- Secure the airway. If teeth are clenched, do not try to prise them open to insert an airway. Instead, if the airway is obstructed, try a nasopharyngeal airway (see  Insertion of nasopharyngeal airway, p. 335).
- Give IV lorazepam (0.1mg/kg) or if venous access is unsuccessful, buccal midazolam (0.5mg/kg, max 10mg) or PR diazepam (0.5mg/kg).
- Check bedside strip measurement of venous/capillary BMG, and treat hypoglycaemia with glucose IV 0.2g/kg (2mL/kg of 10%).
- Treat fever >38°C with PR paracetamol.
- If fits continue, follow the algorithm for status epilepticus (see  Status epilepticus, p. 705).

After the fit has finished

Reassess Airway, Breathing, and Circulation. Continue O₂ and place in the recovery position until consciousness is regained. Check for any injuries sustained as a result of the fit, and perform regular observations.

First fit

Refer for investigation of possible causes. U&E, blood glucose, Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺, FBC, and urinalysis will be required.

Subsequent fit

If appropriate, check serum anticonvulsant level and arrange for follow-up at the GP/outpatient clinic to receive the results and adjust the dose appropriately. Allow home those patients with known epilepsy who have fully recovered and have no obvious underlying medical cause for the fit needing treatment (eg meningitis, hypoglycaemia).

Status epilepticus

Definition A fit (or consecutive fits without complete recovery in between) lasting >30min. The duration of the seizures is often underestimated because the intensity of the jerking diminishes with time and small-amplitude twitching may be easily missed.

Status epilepticus usually involves tonic-clonic fits and, as in adults, is associated with significant mortality (~4%) and morbidity (up to 30% have long-term neurological damage). Prompt treatment with termination of the fit is crucial to ↓ these risks.

Causes Meningitis, head injury, altered drug therapy or non-compliance in known epileptic child, metabolic disturbances, encephalopathy (including Reye's syndrome), 'febrile status', poisoning.

Managing the fitting child (See *APLS Manual*, sixth edition, 2016.)

- Open and maintain airway, and give O₂.
- Do not prise open clenched teeth—consider a nasopharyngeal airway.
- Rapidly obtain venous access, and check BMG.

If convulsion continuing at 5min

- If the fit has lasted for 5min, give lorazepam 0.1mg/kg IV/IO over 30–60s, or if venous access is unsuccessful, give buccal midazolam (0.5mg/kg, max 10mg) or PR diazepam (0.5mg/kg).
- Treat hypoglycaemia with glucose 2mL/kg IV of 10%.
- Apply pulse oximeter and send blood for investigations (see  Investigations, p. 705).
- Check T°—if >38°C, give paracetamol 15mg/kg PR.

If convulsion continuing after a further 10min

- Repeat lorazepam 0.1mg/kg IV/IO over 30–60s. Do not give >2 doses of benzodiazepines, including prehospital treatment.
- Get senior help and call for senior ED/anaesthetic/PICU help.

If convulsion continuing after a further 10min

- Start phenytoin 20mg/kg IVI over 20min (monitor BP and ECG), or if already on phenytoin, consider instead phenobarbital (20mg/kg IV over 20min) or levetiracetam or sodium valproate.
- Whilst preparing to give phenytoin IVI, consider giving a dose of PR paraldehyde (0.4mL/kg) mixed with an equal volume of olive oil (thus making a total volume of 0.8mL/kg of the paraldehyde + oil mixture).

If convulsion continuing after a further 20min

- Paralyse, intubate, and ventilate using IV thiopental (induction dose 4mg/kg), and consider a thiopental infusion. Alternatively, consider midazolam IVI (0.1–1mg/kg/hr)—if this fails to control the fit, use thiopental.
- Transfer to ICU/PICU.

Investigations BMG and blood glucose, U&E, Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺, PO₄³⁻, LFTs, FBC, ABG/capillary gas, blood cultures, coagulation screen, CXR. If taking anticonvulsant(s)—check serum level(s). Obtain brain CT scan if intracranial disease is suspected (unless clinically meningitis, in which case treat immediately—see  Meningococcal disease, pp. 682–3).

Febrile convulsions

Definition

Grand mal seizures lasting <5min and secondary to pyrexia of febrile illness. By definition, children already diagnosed as epileptic do not have febrile convulsions, but 'further fits'.

Background

Febrile convulsions are the most common cause of convulsions in children aged between 6 months and 5y. They affect 3% of children. Although 30% recur in childhood, only 1% go on to develop epilepsy in adult life.

When the patient first presents to ED either still having a fit or post-ictal, it is often not immediately apparent that the underlying problem is a febrile convolution.

Management

- Treat patients who arrive having a convolution with O₂, airway care, and IV lorazepam, PR diazepam, or buccal midazolam, as described in ↗ The fitting patient, p. 704.
- Check T°.
- Check BMG and treat hypoglycaemia.
- Give PR (or, if conscious, PO) paracetamol (15mg/kg).
- Examine thoroughly for a source of infection (throat, ears, chest, and particularly for meningitis).
- Consider the need for an infection screen: U&E, FBC, blood cultures, MSU, CXR, and LP.

Admission or discharge

Aim to discharge children aged >2y with a second or subsequent febrile convolution and an obvious benign and treatable cause for pyrexia, with appropriate treatment. Liaise with the GP to consider arranging for parents to administer PR diazepam or buccal midazolam to terminate future febrile fits.

Refer for admission children with one or more of the following:

- Age <2y.
- A first febrile fit.
- Underlying serious infection.
- An unknown cause of pyrexia.

Funny turns

Only a minority of reported 'funny turns' are epileptic fits. Most require referral and investigation. The history is crucial—the likely underlying causes vary according to the age of the child.

Infants

Irregular and varying depth of respiration during sleep is normal but can cause parental alarm. Self-limiting apnoeic or cyanotic episodes may be due to: fits, inhaled FBs, near-miss cot death, gastro-oesophageal reflux and laryngeal spasm, or arrhythmias (eg SVT).

Toddlers

Breath-holding attacks commonly accompany frustration in toddlers. They may cause the toddler to turn blue, lose consciousness, and even have a brief fit. Reflex anoxic episodes ('pallid syncope') are due to excess vagal stimulation in illness or after injury. Bradycardia, pallor, and loss of consciousness are occasionally accompanied by a short fit.

Older children

Syncope on exertion is suggestive of a cardiac cause—consider aortic stenosis, SVT, coarctation, or hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. Vasovagal episodes and hyperventilation also cause 'collapse'. Atypical or unheralded collapse or fits may be a feature of inherited long QT syndrome and is associated with torsades de pointes. Obtain an ECG in any child who presents with collapse or 'first fit'.

The decision to refer/admit or discharge depends upon the exact circumstances, including the past history of similar episodes.

Diabetic ketoacidosis

DKA usually presents in a child who is known to have diabetes, but occasionally it can be the first presentation of diabetes.

Features include: altered conscious level, polyuria, polydipsia, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Children with DKA can die from cerebral oedema (unpredictable but has 25% mortality), aspiration pneumonia, or hypokalaemia. All of these are potentially avoidable with appropriate treatment.

Be careful not to misdiagnose the abdominal pain of DKA as a 'surgical abdomen' or to dismiss the child as 'hyperventilating' (the ↑ RR reflects profound metabolic acidosis). Call senior ED and paediatric staff when DKA is suspected.

Causes

First presentation of diabetes in a previously well child. In a child with known diabetes, lack of insulin, change of therapy, and intercurrent viral illness can cause DKA. Fever suggests sepsis (it is not part of DKA).

Initial assessment and management

(See  <https://www.bsped.org.uk> and  <https://www.nice.org.uk> for detailed guidance.)

- Open and maintain airway if not fully conscious.
- Give high-flow O₂.
- Weigh the child if possible.
- Consider inserting an NG tube if unconscious or vomiting to ↓ the risk of aspiration.
- Attach a cardiac monitor (look for tall T waves) and record the CRT/BP.
- Rapidly obtain venous access and check BMG (remember BMG often underestimates blood glucose in DKA), and estimate the weight.
- Take blood for glucose, U&E, FBC, and VBG (and ketones if available).
- Only if evidence of shock (tachycardia, prolonged CRT, hypotension), give 10mL/kg of 0.9% saline IV as a bolus; discuss with senior/expert if repeated boluses are required. Consider sepsis if there is any of: fever, hypothermia, hypotension, refractory acidosis, and lactic acidosis.

Confirm the diagnosis of DKA

Check the history with the child and parents: polyuria, polydipsia, vomiting, abdominal pain, drowsiness, and ↑ RR.

Biochemical diagnosis is: glucose >11mmol/L, acidosis (pH <7.3), bicarbonate <15mmol/L, and capillary blood ketones >3mmol/L.

Assess severity/dehydration

Make a clinical assessment of the degree of dehydration.

The degree of dehydration/severity of DKA can be determined by pH:

- pH ≥7.1 implies mild or moderate DKA (~5% dehydration).
- pH <7.1 implies severe DKA (~10% dehydration).

The major concern is cerebral oedema—aim for slow metabolic correction over 48hr.

Involve senior paediatric ± PICU staff

Involve PICU if aged <2y, severe acidosis (pH <7.1), severe dehydration, or ↓ conscious level (↑ risk of aspiration and cerebral oedema).

Management

Oral or IV fluids

- Treat DKA with PO fluids and SC insulin only if the child is alert, not vomiting, and not dehydrated.
- Treat with IV fluids and IV insulin if the child is not alert, is dehydrated, or has nausea/vomiting.
- Only give an IV fluid bolus (10mL/kg) if shocked. Only give further boluses on expert advice (and if $>20\text{mmol/L}$ is given, subtract any additional bolus volume from the 48hr total fluid calculation).

IV fluid management

Calculate the total fluid requirement for the first 48hr by adding the estimated fluid deficit to the maintenance requirement. Assume a 5% fluid deficit if pH is ≥ 7.1 , and a 10% deficit if pH is <7.1 .

Calculate maintenance fluid requirement using the 'reduced volume' rules:

- If weight is $<10\text{kg}$, give 2mL/kg/hr maintenance.
- If weight is 10–40kg, give 1mL/kg/hr maintenance.
- If weight is $>40\text{kg}$, give a fixed maintenance volume of 40mL/hr.

The fluid therapy calculator on  <https://www.bsped.org.uk> is useful.

- Replace the deficit evenly over 48hr to \downarrow the risk of cerebral oedema.
- Start replacing with 0.9% saline + 40mmol/L KCl (unless renal failure), but any initial fluid bolus should be 0.9% saline without KCl.
- Change fluid to 0.9% saline + 40mmol/L KCl + 5% glucose once plasma glucose level falls to below 14mmol/L.
- If plasma glucose falls $<6\text{mmol/L}$, \uparrow glucose concentration of IVI—if there is persisting ketosis, continue insulin IVI at least 0.05U/kg/hr.
- Consider stopping IV fluids if ketosis is resolving and the child is alert and able to take PO fluids without nausea/vomiting.

Insulin

- Do not start insulin until IV fluids have been running for at least 1hr—earlier insulin \uparrow risk of cerebral oedema. Give 0.05–0.1U/kg/hr (adding 50U of insulin to 50mL solution of 0.9% saline provides a concentration of 1U/mL (so 0.1U/kg/hr = 0.1mL/kg/hr)).
- Do not administer bicarbonate.

Monitoring

- Perform hourly observations (pulse, BP, RR, T°, GCS).
- Monitor fluid balance (input/output chart).
- Monitor ECG whilst receiving IV therapy (look for U waves).
- Check blood glucose hourly and blood ketones every 2hr.
- Check U&E after 2hr of treatment.

Cerebral oedema

Suspect cerebral oedema if headache, agitation, $\downarrow\downarrow$ pulse, and \uparrow BP develops. Get expert help. Give mannitol (20%, 0.5–1g/kg over 15min) if \downarrow GCS, pupil dilatation or inequality, oculomotor palsy, and respiratory pauses.

Hypokalaemia

If K^+ drops to $<3\text{mmol/L}$, get expert help and consider temporarily suspending insulin IVI.

Urinary tract infection

UTI in children requires prompt investigation, since progressive renal failure and hypertension may occur insidiously. 35% have proven vesico-ureteric reflux—early treatment may help to prevent renal failure. UTI may present in a variable and non-specific fashion. Consider and exclude UTI as part of the initial approach to any ill child presenting to the ED.

Presentations

Older children typically present with lower abdominal pain, dysuria, frequency, offensive urine, haematuria, or fever. However, dysuria and frequency do not always reflect UTI. Children <3y old often present unwell with fever and irritability, but no specific signs. Infants may present with poor feeding, vomiting, and failure to thrive.

Examination

Always check the BP, and feel for loin tenderness (pyelonephritis) and abdominal masses (polycystic kidneys). Check T° and assess as for  The sick febrile child, p. 680.

Investigation

Obtain a clean-catch specimen of urine for urinalysis, microscopy, and culture and sensitivity. This can be difficult, but try the following approaches.

Neonates and infants

- Clean the perineum with sterile water, then tap with two fingers (or rub the skin gently with a gauze swab soaked with cold water) just above the symphysis pubis (ideally 1hr post-feed) and catch the urine which is forthcoming, trying to avoid the first few millilitres.
- Clean the perineum as above and use a urine collection pad according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Suprapubic aspiration is useful if the baby is seriously ill. Clean the skin with antiseptic solution, then using sterile gloves and an aseptic technique, insert a 21G needle in the midline 2.5cm above the pubic crest and aspirate urine.

Toddlers and older children

- Co-operation will enable an MSU to be obtained [in the ♂, gently retract the foreskin (if possible) and clean the glans first; in the ♀, separate the labia and clean the perineum front to back first].
- If the child is unco-operative, try a urine collection pad or bag.

Dipstick urinalysis at the bedside will reveal the presence of blood, protein, sugar, bilirubin, ketones, or nitrite. A positive nitrite test is accepted as good evidence of UTI. Urine pH is not usually helpful, for although pH <4.6 or >8.0 may reflect infection, it may also be due to various acid–base disorders. Urinalysis may be normal, despite bacteriuria. Urinary leucocyte esterase may also help to identify UTI. Urine microscopy allows a search for pyuria and bacteriuria (highly suggestive of UTI) and an accurate assessment of other constituents (see Table 15.7). Perform FBC, U&E, blood glucose, and blood cultures if septicaemic, loin pain, or ↑ T°.

Treatment

(See NICE guideline CG54, updated 2018, available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk>)

- Children with suspected pyelonephritis or who appear toxic: resuscitate as necessary with IV fluids (see  The sick febrile child, p. 680), and refer for admission and IV antibiotics (eg cefuroxime) (see BNFC). Consider children who have a $T^{\circ} >38^{\circ}\text{C}$ or those who present with loin pain/tenderness and bacteriuria to have pyelonephritis.
- Symptomatic children with abnormal urinalysis (+ve nitrite, proteinuria, or haematuria): start a 3-day course of antibiotics PO (eg trimethoprim or cefalexin—dose according to age; refer to BNFC). Encourage plenty of PO fluids and complete voiding of urine. Offer advice to the child and parents (eg avoid tight underwear, use toilet paper wiping from front to back).
- Organize paediatric or GP follow-up to receive results of MSU and to arrange subsequent investigations: this may include U&E, blood glucose, USS, and a variety of other tests (eg isotope renography and micturating cysto-urethrography), according to local policy.
- Recurrent UTIs with anogenital signs may be due to sexual abuse.

Table 15.7 Urine microscopy findings and their significance

Red cells	Normally <3/mm ³
White cells	Normally <3/mm ³
Epithelial cells	Present normally—shed from urinary epithelium
Bacteria or fungi	Always abnormal, reflecting infection or specimen contamination
Casts	Hyaline casts: comprise Tamm–Horsfall protein—may be normal, but ↑ in fever, exercise, heart failure, and after diuretics Fine granular casts—may be present normally, eg after exercise Coarse granular casts—abnormal, seen in various renal disorders Red cell casts—imply glomerular disease and glomerular bleeding White cell casts—occur in glomerulonephritis and pyelonephritis Epithelial casts—usually reflect tubular damage
Crystals	Phosphate, urate, and oxalate crystals may not be pathological but are also seen in <i>Proteus</i> UTI and hyperuricaemia

Haematuria

Background

Dark or discoloured urine is frightening for both the child and parents. Although it may reflect haematuria, it may reflect other causes: very concentrated urine, beetroot, porphyria, conjugated hyperbilirubinaemia, and free Hb or myoglobin (usually black, as seen in rhabdomyolysis and malaria). Certain drugs or foods may discolour the urine (see Table 15.8).

Table 15.8 Possible alternative causes of discoloured urine

Drug/food	Colour
Rifampicin	Orange/pink
Desferrioxamine, senna, rhubarb	Brown
Methylthioninium chloride (methylene blue)	Green

If haematuria is confirmed by urinalysis, obtain a detailed history, remembering to ask about preceding illnesses and trauma, foreign travel, drug history, and family history of renal or bleeding disorders.

A full relevant examination includes BP and a careful check for abdominal masses and oedema.

Causes of macroscopic haematuria

- UTI (including schistosomiasis).
- Glomerulonephritis.
- Trauma.
- Wilm's tumour.
- Bleeding disorder.
- Urinary tract stones.
- Drugs (warfarin, cyclophosphamide).
- Factitious.

Microscopic haematuria may be associated with exercise or hypercalciuria or can be familial.

Investigations

Send MSU and obtain USS of the urinary tract if there is abdominal pain suggesting stones (relatively rare). Check U&E, blood glucose, FBC, clotting screen, and, if significant bleeding (or if haematuria follows trauma), cross-match. Further tests may be required (throat swab, urine and serum osmolalities, viral titres, anti-streptolysin O, antinuclear antibodies, complement levels), but do not assist emergency treatment.

Management

Severe haematuria with clots requires resuscitation with IV fluids (\pm blood) but is uncommon in children, except after trauma. Treat associated severe hypertension or hyperkalaemia associated with renal failure as described in  Acute kidney injury, pp. 714–15. Refer children with haematuria of non-traumatic origin to the paediatrician.

Glomerulonephritis

Glomerulonephritis in children is often an immune reaction following an URTI due to β -haemolytic streptococcal infection 2–3 weeks previously. It may present with haematuria, oliguria \pm hypertension and uraemia. Refer for admission and further investigation.

A similar presentation can occur with Henoch–Schönlein purpura (see  Purpuric rashes, p. 681), SLE, or Berger's disease (mesangial IgA nephropathy).

Acute kidney injury

Causes

Pre-renal Hypovolaemia (bleeding, dehydration, sepsis), heart failure, nephrotic syndrome.

Renal Haemolytic uraemic syndrome, glomerulonephritis, acute tubular necrosis, drugs.

Post-renal Obstruction following trauma or calculi.

Presentation and investigation

Presentation varies according to the cause. Emergency investigations include MSU for microscopy, culture and sensitivity, urine and plasma osmolality, U&E, blood glucose, FBC, albumin, LFTs, clotting screen, and ECG monitoring.

Treatment

Get expert help early. Pre-renal failure from hypovolaemia (urine:plasma osmolality ratio usually >5) should respond to treatment of the underlying condition and an IV fluid challenge (20mL/kg of 0.9% saline \pm blood products, depending on the cause). Urinary catheter and close monitoring may help to assess fluid status. Urgent USS can assess for obstruction of the urinary tract, the presence of stones, and vascular filling status. ED treatment of renal failure focusses on hyperkalaemia and hypertension.

Hypertension

Hypertension related to volume overload in renal failure may require IV nitrate therapy (\pm diuretic) in the ED (as for pulmonary oedema), but otherwise seek expert help for further intervention.

Hyperkalaemia

Children presenting with hyperkalaemia ($K^+ >7$) in advanced renal failure may require emergency measures prior to dialysis.

Adopt the following approach to manage hyperkalaemia:

- Obtain expert help.
- Place the child on a cardiac monitor and obtain an ECG.
- If there are ECG changes (widened QRS complexes or tall T waves), give 0.5mL/kg of 10% calcium gluconate over 5min to stabilize the myocardium. This will not significantly alter the blood K^+ level.
- Give nebulized salbutamol (2.5mg if <3 y; 5mg if 3–7y; 10mg if >7 y). This redistributes and forces K^+ into cells within 30min and may be repeated after 2hr.
- Recheck K^+ and if falling after salbutamol, give calcium resonium 1g/kg PO or PR. If K^+ remains high after salbutamol, assess the pH—if pH <7.34 , give sodium bicarbonate 1–2mmol/kg IV; if pH >7.34 , give 10% glucose 5mL/kg/hr IV and insulin 0.05U/kg/hr.
- Plan dialysis as necessary.

Note that this approach is also appropriate for other causes of hyperkalaemia (eg adrenal insufficiency, acidosis, cell lysis).

Nephrotic syndrome

Most cases of oedema, heavy proteinuria, and hypoalbuminaemia (\pm hypercholesterolaemia) are idiopathic ('minimal change nephropathy'). The presentation is diverse and includes: anorexia, lethargy, frothy urine, mild diarrhoea, abdominal pain, ascites, oliguria, and peri-orbital or genital oedema. The prognosis is generally good, but peritonitis and renal or cerebral venous thrombosis may occur.

Check U&E, albumin, LFTs, FBC, complement, cholesterol, and lipids. Refer for further investigation/treatment.

Haemolytic uraemic syndrome

Micro-angiopathic haemolytic anaemia, thrombocytopenia, and renal failure of haemolytic uraemic syndrome typically affect infants/toddlers following a diarrhoeal illness (*Escherichia coli* O157, verocytotoxin, or *Shigella*). The disease is also associated with SLE, HIV, and various tumours. The child may present oliguric or anuric, with \downarrow conscious level due to encephalopathy. Mortality is $>5\%$.

FBC reveals anaemia with visible RBC fragments, thrombocytopenia, and leucocytosis. Coombs' test is -ve. Urea and creatinine levels are usually \uparrow , and there may be electrolyte disturbances.

Treat life-threatening hyperkalaemia as above, and refer for possible dialysis and transfusion.

Poisoning in children

Paediatric poisoning may take many forms:

- Neonatal poisoning from drugs taken by the mother prior to birth (eg opioids, benzodiazepines).
- ‘Accidental’ (unintentional) poisoning is the most common form of poisoning. It largely involves toddlers and preschool children (boys > girls), who are at particular risk because of their innate curiosity and considerable indiscretion in putting things in their mouths. Children may be poisoned by any drugs that they can get their hands on, but also mushrooms, berries, plants, household items (eg disinfectant), and other objects misinterpreted as drink, food, or sweets (eg button batteries).
- Inadvertent self-poisoning with recreational drugs (including alcohol and volatile agents).
- Iatrogenic poisoning by administration of the wrong dose ± wrong drug can happen with frightening ease. Paediatric dosage charts, calculators, obsessional checking, attention to detail, and automatic checks via electronic prescribing should help to prevent this.
- Deliberate self-poisoning in an apparent suicide attempt occurs in (mostly) older children.
- Intentional poisoning by a parent, guardian, or carer is a sinister aspect of child abuse, which includes fabricated or induced illness (see ↗ Fabricated or induced illness, p. 760). The child may present in a bizarre fashion, with a non-specific illness, for which the diagnosis is not immediately apparent.

Approach

Follow the general guidelines described in ↗ Poisons: background, pp. 188–9; ↗ Diagnosis of poisoning, p. 190; ↗ Poisons: supportive care, p. 191; ↗ Reducing absorption of poison, pp. 192–3; and ↗ Antidotes for poisons, pp. 194–5 to treat poisoned patients, with initial attention to oxygenation (airway), ventilation (breathing), and circulation. The National Poisons Information Service (↗ <https://www.toxbase.org>) provides advice for specific poisonings (see ↗ Poisons: background, pp. 188–9). With some notable exceptions (eg paracetamol, opioids, iron, and digoxin), there are few ‘antidotes’ available—treatment is often largely supportive.

Try to elicit the substance(s) ingested, the amount involved, and the time since ingestion. The majority of ingestions are unintentional and the time to presentation is often short.

Gastric emptying

Procedures designed to empty gastric contents (eg gastric lavage) are rarely indicated—consider only if advised by TOXBASE®. Do not use ‘ipecac’ (ipecacuanha), which is ineffective in ↓ drug absorption and can be dangerous. Never try to empty the stomach following ingestion of petrol or corrosives (see ↗ Petrol and paraffin poisoning, p. 213).

Charcoal

The role of charcoal (dose 1g/kg PO in infants; 15–30g in older children) in paediatric poisoning is limited by its lack of palatability. Attempts are currently being made to make charcoal more palatable, yet remaining effective.

Prevention of paediatric poisoning

Background

Poisoning in children is very common. More than 40,000 children present to hospital in the UK each year, many of whom are admitted for observation. Thankfully, relatively few (10–15/y) die. More than 75% of paediatric unintentional ingestions involve drugs and poisons in the home that are plainly visible to the child. Poisoning is particularly likely to occur at times of 'stress' (eg arrival of new baby, disturbed parental relationships, moving house) when there may be ↓ supervision and disruption of the usual routine. Perhaps partly for this reason, children who present with a first episode of poisoning are at ↑ risk of further episodes. It is therefore important to advise the parents of ways of preventing poisoning in children (see list in  Advice for parents (consider providing a leaflet), p. 717).

Official measures: packaging of drugs

Legislation has been introduced to try to tackle the problem of poisoning in children. Perhaps the most successful has been the widespread adoption of child-resistant drug containers. Unfortunately, it is not yet mandatory for these containers to be used for liquid drugs or potentially dangerous household items such as bleach. Some drugs are presented in 'strip packaging', in the hope that an impulsive child would lose interest before gaining access to a significant quantity.

Advice for parents (consider providing a leaflet)

- Provide adequate supervision for toddlers and young children, particularly when visiting friends and relatives.
- Keep all medicines locked out of reach in a cupboard.
- Only purchase those drugs presented in child-resistant containers.
- Dispose of out-of-date drugs and those no longer required.
- Never refer to drugs as 'sweets' in an attempt to encourage the child to take them.
- Take medicines out of sight of the child to help prevent imitation.
- Keep all alcohol, perfumes, cosmetics, detergents, and bleaches out of reach.
- Ensure that all turpentine, paints, and weed killers are securely locked and inaccessible.
- Give away all toxic plants.
- Keep ashtrays and waste baskets empty.

Gastroenteritis in children

(See also an overview in [Gastroenteritis/food poisoning, pp. 236–7.](#))

A baby's parents may seek advice about diarrhoea when, in fact, the stools are normal. Breastfed babies almost always have loose stools, which may be yellow or green and very frequent, often after every feed. However, gastroenteritis is relatively rare in fully breastfed babies. In children aged >6 months, normal stool frequency ranges from one stool on alternate days to three stools daily.

Assessment of dehydration

Clinical evidence of mild dehydration (<5%)

- Thirst.
- ↓ urinary output (in a baby <4 wet nappies in 24hr).
- Dry mouth.

Clinical evidence of moderate dehydration (5–10%)

- Sunken fontanelle in infants.
- Sunken eyes.
- Tachypnoea (due to metabolic acidosis).
- Tachycardia.

Clinical evidence of severe dehydration (>10%)

- ↓ skin turgor on pinching the skin.
- Drowsiness/lethargy or irritability.

Admission decision

It can be difficult to decide whether or not to admit a child to hospital for treatment. Admit if the child looks seriously ill, is clinically >5% dehydrated, has not passed urine for >12hr, or has a high fever, or there is doubt about the diagnosis or the family are unlikely to cope at home.

Refer for admission children with bloody and/or mucoid diarrhoea—to exclude *Escherichia coli* O157 infection, which may ↑ the risk of developing haemolytic uraemic syndrome.

Babies aged <3 months may be difficult to assess and can deteriorate rapidly—refer for admission.

In children who are less seriously ill, consider making the decision about admission based upon the response to oral rehydration therapy.

Management

Treat severely dehydrated (>10%) children with immediate IV fluids, initially 0.9% saline (10mL/kg over 5min, repeated as necessary).

Consider IV fluids for children with moderate dehydration, especially if they are vomiting and unable to keep oral fluids down.

Give a trial of oral rehydration therapy to children with mild dehydration, with the aim of discharging them if the trial feed is successful (see [Oral rehydration therapy, p. 719.](#))

Oral rehydration therapy

(See NICE guidance—<https://www.nice.org.uk>)

If a child with mild dehydration makes a satisfactory response to a test feed, consider discharge with oral rehydration therapy. Standard products (eg Dioralyte®) contain glucose, Na⁺, K⁺, Cl⁻, and citrate (details in BNF). Glucose is important to enhance absorption of Na⁺ and water.

Rehydrate according to age:

- Children aged ≤5y: give 50mL/kg of oral rehydration therapy for fluid deficit replacement over 4hr, as well as maintenance fluid (see Table 15.9).
- Children >5y: give 200mL of oral rehydration therapy after each loose stool, in addition to maintenance fluid (see Table 15.9).

Advice for parents

- Give oral replacement therapy frequently and in small amounts, and seek urgent medical advice if the child vomits repeatedly or is unable to drink.
- If the child is slow to recover, give 5mL/kg of oral rehydration therapy after each large watery stool.
- Avoid solid food until dehydration has been corrected, then reintroduce the usual diet, but avoid fruit juice and fizzy drinks until diarrhoea has stopped, as these often have high osmolarity and may worsen diarrhoea.

Additional treatments

Do not prescribe anti-diarrhoeal agents, probiotics, or antiemetic drugs for children with gastroenteritis. Similarly, do not give antibiotics without specialist advice (eg proven *Salmonella* in immunocompromised or young babies).

Table 15.9 Daily maintenance fluid requirements in children

Child weight	Daily maintenance fluid volume
0–10kg	100mL/kg
10–20kg	1000mL + 50mL/kg for every kg over 10kg
>20kg	1500mL + 20mL/kg for every kg over 20kg

Abdominal pain in children

The approach to the initial assessment and management of children presenting with abdominal pain is similar in many ways to that in adults (see Approach to abdominal pain, pp. 520–1). Beware underlying ‘medical’ causes (eg DKA, pneumonia). Disease processes may progress with great rapidity in children, so adopt a low threshold for referring children with abdominal pain to the surgical team. Whilst many of the common causes of abdominal pain are the same in children as in adults (eg Acute appendicitis, p. 523), be aware of causes that are typically paediatric (eg intussusception). Likewise, certain causes of intestinal obstruction are seen almost exclusively in children. Avoid performing PR examination.

Paediatric causes of intestinal obstruction

- Congenital (eg oesophageal/duodenal atresia, Hirschsprung’s disease).
- Meconium ileus.
- Hypertrophic pyloric stenosis.
- Intussusception.
- Hernia (inguinal, umbilical).

Hypertrophic pyloric stenosis

Features

Relatively common, this typically presents with effortless vomiting at 2–10 weeks. It occurs more often in boys than girls and in first-born children. Vomiting becomes projectile, with progressive dehydration and constipation. The vomit is not bile-stained. After vomiting, the baby appears hungry and keen to feed again. In advanced cases, there may be profound hypochloraemic alkalosis, with associated hypokalaemia.

Diagnosis

Look for visible peristalsis. Abdominal palpation confirms the diagnosis if an olive-sized lump is felt in the epigastrium (most prominent during a test feed). If the diagnosis is suspected, but not proven clinically, resuscitate (as below) and arrange USS.

Management

Once diagnosed, keep the infant nil by mouth. Insert an IV cannula and send blood for U&E, glucose, and FBC. Start fluid resuscitation under senior guidance and refer to the surgeon—operative treatment will be delayed until dehydration and electrolyte abnormalities have been corrected (this may take >24hr). Defer insertion of an NG tube for appropriately experienced staff.

Volvulus

This is associated with congenital malrotations but may occur in other circumstances also (eg Meckel’s diverticulum, adhesions from previous surgery). It can present with abdominal pain and other features of intestinal obstruction (vomiting, distension), sometimes with a palpable mass. Obtain an abdominal X-ray and refer promptly to the surgical team in order to maximize the chance of intervening to preserve bowel.

Intussusception

Telescoping of one segment of bowel into another may affect the small or large bowel, but most cases are ileocolic. This typically affects children aged between 6 months and 4y. The child may suddenly become distressed, roll up into a ball, and appear unwell. Vomiting may develop and the child may pass a 'redcurrant jelly' stool. These features, however, together with pyrexia and a palpable mass, are not invariably present—sometimes the presentation is shock without an obvious cause. X-rays may be normal or reveal an absent caecal shadow.

If intussusception is suspected, refer urgently to the surgical team. The diagnosis may be confirmed by air or barium enema, which may also be curative, by reducing the intussusception. A barium enema characteristically reveals a 'coiled spring' sign or sudden termination of the barium but is contraindicated if there is evidence of perforation.

Acute appendicitis

(See  Acute appendicitis, p. 523.)

Consider this diagnosis in any child presenting with abdominal pain. Acute appendicitis can occur in children of all ages. It can be a difficult diagnosis to make, especially in the very young. 'Atypical' clinical presentation (eg diarrhoeal illness) is often associated with delayed diagnosis and an ↑ rate of perforation. Do not perform a PR examination—in the unlikely event of this being considered essential, leave it to the surgical team.

Abdominal mass

There are many causes of abdominal masses in children, many of which may be relatively benign and asymptomatic:

- Full bladder.
- Full colon.
- Enlarged liver and/or spleen.
- Pregnancy in older children.
- Hydronephrosis.
- Hypertrophic pyloric stenosis (see  Hypertrophic pyloric stenosis, p. 720).
- Appendix mass.
- Intussusception.
- Volvulus.
- Neuroblastoma.
- Nephroblastoma (Wilm's tumour).

Intra-abdominal malignancy

Neuroblastoma and nephroblastoma may reach a large size before causing symptoms (eg haemorrhage into the tumour).

Neuroblastomas Arise most commonly from the adrenal glands but may occur at any point along the sympathetic chain.

Nephroblastomas (Wilm's tumours) Arise from the kidneys and may present with haematuria.

All children with suspected malignant abdominal masses require CT scan and/or USS investigation—refer urgently to the surgical team.

Inguinal and scrotal swellings

Painless groin and scrotal lumps

The parent or child who discovers a lump may become very concerned. The absence of pain is, to some extent, reassuring, in that an acute surgical problem is unlikely. Ascertain when the swelling appeared, whether it changes in size or disappears, or whether there are any other symptoms.

Reducible inguinal hernia

Inguinal hernias in childhood result from a persistent patent processus vaginalis and are therefore indirect in nature. They are more common in boys than girls and often bilateral. The history is typically of an intermittent swelling, which appears with coughing or straining. If the swelling can be demonstrated, it will be impossible to get above it. If it cannot be demonstrated, a thickened spermatic cord may be palpated (sometimes known as the 'silk sign'). Refer neonatal hernias for admission and surgery, and refer infants and older children to a surgical clinic for elective surgery.

Painless irreducible inguinal hernia

Refer all irreducible inguinal hernias for admission and surgery (preceded by gallows traction in the infant).

Hydrocele

This transilluminable painless scrotal swelling has a similar aetiology to inguinal hernia. It appears gradually, rather than suddenly, and does not empty or reduce on palpation. Refer to a surgical clinic. An encysted hydrocele of the cord may be impossible to distinguish from an irreducible inguinal hernia and therefore requires surgical exploration.

Undescended, retractile, or ectopic testis

Complete descent of the testis has yet to occur in 3% of term infants and 30% of premature infants. Arrange surgical follow-up if the testis cannot be brought down to the fundus of the scrotal sac—orchidopexy will be required if the testis fails to descend by 4y.

Inguinal lymphadenopathy

This is on the list of differential diagnoses of painless inguinal swellings. Look for a potential source of infection in the leg and for involvement of any other lymph node groups.

Idiopathic scrotal oedema

An obscure allergic condition of the scrotal skin is possibly a variant of angioneurotic oedema. Redness, mild tenderness, and oedema are not limited to one hemiscrotum. The testis is normal. The condition settles spontaneously, a process helped by antihistamines (eg chlorphenamine PO, doses: child 1–2y require 1mg bd; 2–5y require 1mg qds; 6–12y require 2mg qds). If in doubt—refer.

Painful groin and scrotal lumps

Painful irreducible inguinal hernia

Likely to contain obstructed or strangulated small bowel. Confirm clinical suspicion of intestinal obstruction (pain, vomiting, and abdominal distension) by X-ray. Resuscitate as necessary with IV fluids; give analgesia, and refer for surgery.

Testicular torsion

Most common in the neonatal period and around puberty. In the neonatal period, torsion is extravaginal in nature and often diagnosed late. Later in childhood, torsion of a completely descended testis is intravaginal due to high insertion of the tunica vaginalis. Undescended testes are also at particular risk of torsion. Classical presentation is with sudden-onset severe pain and vomiting. Occasionally, the pain is entirely abdominal. Examination reveals a red, tender, swollen testis. The opposite testis may be seen to lie horizontally, rather than vertically (Angell's sign). Fast and refer all suspected torsions for urgent surgery: exploration, untwisting, and bilateral orchidopexy.

The diagnosis of testicular torsion is not always clear-cut—USS can sometimes be helpful in making the diagnosis, but do not allow this to delay referral to the surgical team.

Torsion of the hydatid of Morgagni

This remnant of the paramesonephric duct on the superior aspect of the testis is prone to undergo torsion, causing pain and vomiting. The pain is typically less severe than in testicular torsion, with a more gradual onset. A discrete, tender (~3cm) nodule may be palpable near the upper pole of the testis—the classic description is of it transilluminating as a blue dot, but this is rarely seen in practice. In contrast to testicular torsion, the remainder of the testis is not tender.

Refer to the surgical team and consider an urgent USS. If testicular torsion is excluded and a definite diagnosis of torsion of the hydatid of Morgagni is made, the surgical team can choose between conservative treatment (analgesia and rest) or surgical excision of the hydatid.

Epididymo-orchitis

Relatively unusual in the paediatric age group but may be associated with UTI. A painful, swollen red testis and epididymis usually develop over a longer period of time. Treatment is with antibiotics (eg ciprofloxacin), but it may be difficult to distinguish from testicular torsion, so refer for an urgent surgical opinion.

Mumps orchitis

The diagnosis is usually apparent because of parotitis (see  Childhood infectious diseases, pp. 230–1). Refer if there is doubt or symptoms are severe.

Henoch–Schönlein purpura

Occasionally, testicular pain may be one of the initial presenting complaints of Henoch–Schönlein purpura (see  Purpuric rashes, p. 681).

Foreskin problems and zip entrapment

Phimosis

The foreskin may normally remain non-retractile up to age 5y. Foreskin that remains non-retractile after this, which 'balloons' on micturition, or is associated with recurrent balanitis may benefit from surgery (preputial stretch or circumcision). Advise the parents to see their GP to discuss referral to a paediatric surgeon.

Balanitis

Balanitis produces redness, swelling, and even pus. Take a swab; check for glucose in the urine and send an MSU. Treat with PO flucloxacillin or clarithromycin, and suggest GP follow-up. If redness and swelling involve the whole penis, refer for IV antibiotics.

Paraphimosis

An irreducible, retracted foreskin results in pain and swelling of the glans. As in the adult, cold compresses and lubricating jelly may allow manual reduction to be performed. If this is not successful, refer for reduction under GA.

Penile zip entrapment

Unfortunately, underpants do not completely protect boys (and sometimes men) from catching their foreskins in trouser zips. On many occasions, the entrapment will be released quickly by the child or parent. On others, the child will present to the ED.

The optimal method to achieve release depends upon the entrapment

- 15% of entrapments follow the foreskin moving through the moveable part of the zip, so that it is simply caught between the teeth of the zip alone. In this case, achieve easy release by cutting transversely through the zip below the entrapment.
- 85% of entrapments involve the foreskin being caught between the teeth and the moveable part of the zip. LA (either injection using plain lidocaine or topical gel) may allow manipulation and release. If this fails, the least traumatic option is to divide the moveable part of the zip into two parts by dividing the central section ('median bar' or 'bridge') using bone cutters or wire cutters (use gauze to protect against parts of the zip flying off) (see Fig. 15.18). Older children and adults may tolerate this in the ED, but in younger boys referral for release under GA is sensible. Circumcision is rarely required.

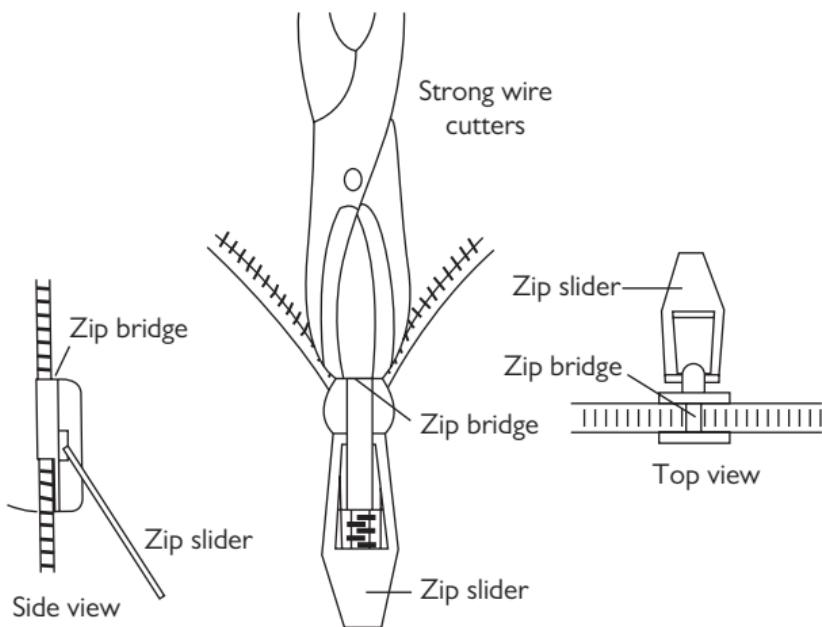


Fig. 15.18 Method to achieve release from zip entrapment.

The limping child

This common problem can cause diagnostic difficulty, particularly in the young child who cannot provide a history and is difficult to examine. Start by searching for, and trying to, exclude some causes of a limp that will require urgent treatment.

Consider the following

- Trauma (fractures, soft tissue injury, FB in foot, NAI).
- Specific hip problems (Perthes', slipped epiphysis, irritable hip—see  The painful hip, pp. 728–9).
- Infection (osteomyelitis, septic arthritis).
- Arthritis (juvenile idiopathic arthritis, juvenile ankylosing spondylitis).
- Osteochondritis (see  Osteochondritis, pp. 730–1).
- Referred pain from an inflammatory process elsewhere.
- Malignant disease (Ewing's sarcoma, leukaemia).
- Sickle-cell crisis (see  Sickle-cell disease, pp. 184–5).

Adopt the following approach.

History

Ascertain whether the problem developed suddenly (eg after trauma) or gradually. Enquire about recent illness and other symptoms, including joint pains elsewhere.

Examination

Check T°. If the child is walking, assess the gait. Carefully inspect all of the painful leg for erythema, swelling, and deformity, and note the position adopted. Exclude a relatively simple problem such as a FB embedded in the foot. Note any skin rashes. Palpate the limb for tenderness, joint effusions, and range of movement (compare with the other side). If the child will not walk but can crawl without any apparent discomfort, this localizes the problem to below the knee (thereby avoiding the need to request 'routine' X-rays of the hips).

Investigation

If the child can walk and looks well, and there is no abnormality apparent on examination, consider providing analgesia and arranging to review after a couple of days, rather than undertaking all of the following investigations immediately. Ensure the parents are told that they should return earlier if the limp gets worse.

X-ray the tender or swollen part, particularly if there is a history of injury. If there is no obvious tenderness, X-ray the pelvis to include both hips. If the X-rays do not reveal a fracture, check WCC and CRP (or plasma viscosity/ESR). If the hip is implicated, but X-rays are normal, request USS of the hip (some experts prefer to use USS as the initial investigation). MRI is emerging as having a potentially useful role. Follow local ED protocols where available.

Management

Treat according to the cause (see below; see also  The painful hip, pp. 728–9;  Osteochondritis, pp. 730–1).

Trauma

Treat according to the cause, which may include a FB in the soft tissues. There may not always be a clear history of injury—this particularly applies to toddler's fracture (see Tibial fractures in children, p. 754). However, the abrupt onset of a limp in a toddler may be a clue to an underlying traumatic cause.

Osteomyelitis

Acute osteomyelitis usually results from blood-borne spread of a distant pathogen (eg from the respiratory tract). *Staphylococcus aureus* is usually responsible, with almost invariable involvement of the metaphysis of a long bone (most commonly proximal or distal femur, or distal tibia).

Features ↑ T°, lethargy, localized tenderness (which may be misdiagnosed as trauma). Septic shock may occur (especially in infants).

Investigations ↑ WCC, ↑ CRP, ↑ ESR >50mm/hr (but all may be normal initially). Send blood cultures which may help to guide later antibiotic use. X-ray changes occur after ~10 days. MRI may enable an earlier diagnosis.

Treatment If suspected, refer for admission, IV antibiotics ± surgical drilling/drainage.

Septic arthritis

Most commonly, *S. aureus* infection in the hip or knee, particularly affecting preschool children. Occasionally secondary to penetrating injury, but usually haematogenous spread from a distant site. Constitutional symptoms, fever, and joint pain occur. Joint movement is likely to be severely impaired. A joint effusion may be clinically evident (and confirmed on USS). Investigations may reveal ↑ WCC, ↑ CRP, and ↑ ESR. Refer for urgent confirmatory joint aspiration and treatment.

Traditionally, the four Kocher criteria ($T^{\circ} \geq 38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$; non-weight-bearing on the affected side; ESR >40mm/hr; WCC $>12 \times 10^9/\text{L}$) have been used to estimate the chance of a child having septic arthritis of the hip. The presence of three criteria is associated with a >90% chance of septic arthritis.

Non-septic arthritis

Multiple painful joints are more likely to be due to a juvenile arthritic process (eg juvenile idiopathic arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis) than septic arthritis. Pain felt in several joints frequently accompanies a variety of infections and other diseases (eg rubella, rheumatic fever, Lyme disease, Henoch-Schönlein purpura). Refer to the paediatrician for further investigation.

The painful hip

The limping child may be able to localize pain to the hip, but hip pain may be referred to the knee. Hip problems causing a limp include trauma, infection, and other disorders, as described in [The limping child, pp. 726–7](#). Specific hip problems include the following.

Perthes' disease (Legg–Calvé–Perthes' disease)

Aseptic necrosis of the upper femoral (capital) epiphysis presents with a painful limp in children aged 3–10y. Boys are affected more than girls ($\text{♂}:\text{♀} = 4:1$); 15% are bilateral. Aetiology is unclear, but Perthes' disease is often grouped with osteochondritides (see [Osteochondritis, pp. 730–1](#)). Often ↓ range of hip movement due to pain. FBC, CRP, ESR, and blood cultures are normal.

X-ray changes Reflect the stage of disease and are progressive (as shown in Fig. 15.19):

- 1 ↑ joint space on medial aspect of capital epiphysis (compare sides).
- 2 ↑ bone density in affected epiphysis (appears sclerotic).
- 3 Fragmentation, distortion (flattening), and lateral subluxation of upper femoral epiphysis (leaving part of the femoral head 'uncovered').
- 4 Rarefaction of the adjacent metaphysis in which cysts may appear.

Treatment Refer for specialist assessment and treatment. Most cases respond satisfactorily to conservative therapy.



Fig. 15.19 Changes in the hip in Perthes' disease.

Irritable hip ('transient synovitis')

Common cause of sudden painful hip and limp in children of all ages. Aetiology is unclear, but many cases may follow viral illness. Presentation varies from a slight limp to great difficulty weight-bearing. X-rays are normal. USS may show hip effusion and allow aspiration for microscopy and culture. (Apply tetracaine cream over the hip before USS.) Pyrexia, ↑ WCC, ↑ CRP (and/or ↑ ESR/plasma viscosity) suggest infection.

Treatment If significant physical signs (significant pain, ↓ movement, difficulty weight-bearing) or there is evidence suggesting infection, refer to the orthopaedic team for admission for rest, traction, and further investigation. If physical signs are not dramatic and X-rays and blood tests are normal, discharge with NSAID, advise rest, and review within a few days.

Slipped upper femoral (capital) epiphysis

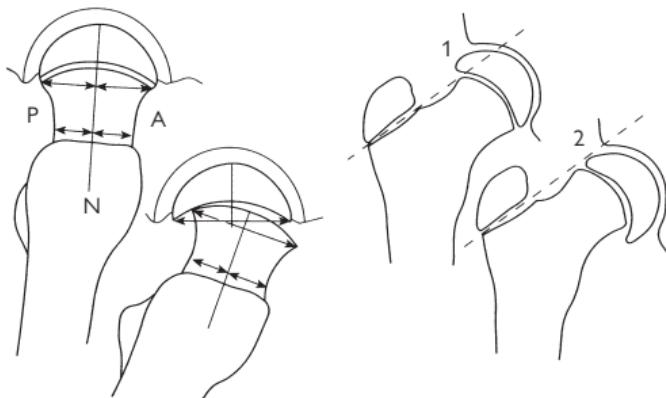
Sometimes occurs during puberty and has been attributed to hormonal imbalance (see Fig. 15.20). It occurs in children (particularly boys: ♂:♀ = 3:1) who have one of two body types: obese with underdeveloped genitalia or tall, thin, rapidly growing adolescent with normal sexual development. It may present with knee (not hip) pain.

Presentation A child aged 10–16y develops a painful limp suddenly or gradually. Often there is a history of trauma. The leg may be slightly adducted, externally rotated, and shortened. Movement of the affected hip is ↓, compared with the other side (especially abduction and internal rotation).

X-ray Obtain AP pelvis and lateral hip views ± 'frog leg' views. Subtle slips may only be seen on the lateral view. Larger slips will be obvious on all views. Look for Trethowan's sign—a line drawn along the superior border of the femoral neck normally cuts through the epiphysis (see Fig. 15.21).

Treatment Refer to orthopaedics for internal fixation ± manipulation.

Complications Avascular necrosis, chondrolysis, and osteoarthritis.



Lateral view showing normal (left) and abnormal (right)

AP view: Trethowan's sign; (1) normal, (2) abnormal hip

Fig. 15.20 Diagrams of slipped upper femoral epiphysis.



Fig. 15.21 X-ray showing slipped right upper femoral epiphysis.

Osteochondritis

This term is applied to a heterogenous array of non-infectious disorders affecting various epiphyses. They may be divided into three groups, according to the proposed aetiology (see Table 15.10).

Crushing osteochondritis

Apparently spontaneous necrosis of an ossification centre occurs at a time of rapid growth. This is followed by new bone formation.

Perthes' disease See  The painful hip, pp. 728–9.

Scheuermann's disease Fragmentation of low thoracic/upper lumbar vertebral epiphyseal plates of adolescents results in chronic back pain and a 'round-shouldered' kyphotic appearance. X-rays show anterior wedging of vertebral bodies, with sclerotic notches (Schmorl's nodes) on inferior or superior vertebral borders. Diagnostic criteria are $>50^\circ$ of kyphosis and wedging in three adjacent vertebrae. Treat symptomatically with NSAID and refer for orthopaedic follow-up.

Kohler's disease Avascular necrosis of the navicular affects children (particularly boys) aged 3–5y. A painful limp develops, with tenderness on the dorsum of the foot over the navicular. The sclerotic fragmented navicular seen on X-ray is also seen in many asymptomatic children. Treat symptoms with rest, NSAID, and orthopaedic follow-up. If symptoms are severe, consider a BKPOP.

Kienbock's and Freiberg's disease Usually affect young adults.

Traction apophysitis

The pull of a strong tendon causes damage to the unfused apophysis to which it is attached.

Osgood–Schlatter's disease Traction apophysitis of the tibial attachment of the patellar tendon is especially seen in boys aged 10–15y. Symptoms may start after a period of excessive activity. Anterior knee pain after exercise is characteristic. The tibial tuberosity is prominent and tender. The pain may be reproduced by attempted extension against resistance.

X-rays are not always needed but may show an enlarged and sometimes fragmented tibial tuberosity. Treat symptomatically with rest, NSAID, and orthopaedic follow-up. Most settle with conservative measures, although children may find this process to be frustrating.

Johansson–Larsen's disease (Sinding Larsen's disease) Traction apophysitis of the lower pole of the patella in young adolescents results in local tenderness. Treat with rest, NSAID, and orthopaedic follow-up.

Sever's disease Traction apophysitis of the calcaneal attachment of the Achilles tendon occurs in 8–14y olds. The resulting limp is associated with local calcaneal tenderness. X-rays may reveal a fragmented sclerotic calcaneal apophysis. Treat with rest, NSAID, a heel raise, and orthopaedic follow-up.

Osteochondritis dissecans

A piece of articular cartilage and adjacent bone become partially or completely separated as an avascular fragment. The cause is believed to be an osteochondral fracture from repeated minor trauma. The lateral aspect of the medial condyle of the distal femur is the most commonly affected site (see Fig. 15.22). Intermittent pain, swelling, and joint effusion result. If the fragment becomes detached as a loose body, locking or giving way may occur.

X-ray Demonstrates a bony fragment or defect. Often the small bony fragment is accompanied by a larger piece of cartilage (which is not seen on X-ray). MRI will demonstrate both.

Treatment Refer the locked knee immediately. Treat the remainder with rest; consider crutches, and arrange orthopaedic follow-up.



Fig. 15.22 X-ray of osteochondritis dissecans in a 13y old.

Table 15.10 Classification of osteochondritis

Type of osteochondritis	Bone affected	Eponym
Crushing osteochondritis	Femoral head	Perthes' disease (see The painful hip, pp. 728–9)
	Vertebrae	Scheuermann's disease
	Second metatarsal head	Freiberg's disease
	Navicular	Kohler's disease
	Lunate	Kienbock's disease
	Capitulum	Panner's disease
	Medial femoral condyle	
Osteochondritis dissecans	Talus	
	Elbow	
	Metatarsal	
	Tibial tuberosity	Osgood–Schlatter's disease
Traction apophysitis	Lower pole of patella	Johansson–Larsen's disease
	Calcaneum	Sever's disease

Major paediatric trauma

Background

Trauma is the largest single cause of death in children: ~500 deaths per year in the UK (see Table 15.11). As in adults, blunt injury in children is far more common than penetrating injury. The number of deaths in children after trauma is dwarfed by the number who sustain serious injuries. Most serious injuries result from road traffic collisions.

Table 15.11 Causes of trauma deaths in children

Road traffic collisions	48%
Fires	15%
Drowning	12%
Hanging	8%
Falls	8%
NAI	5%
Other	4%

More than 70% of paediatric trauma deaths occur in the prehospital setting. Most of these children are either dead when found or have sustained overwhelming injuries. The greatest potential for reducing trauma deaths clearly lies with injury prevention. However, there is enormous potential to reduce the number of permanently disabled children by early identification of injuries and expert treatment. The best outcome results from involvement of senior and experienced staff at an early stage. Prompt recognition of the seriously injured child is crucial to this.

Pattern of injuries

Anatomical and physiological differences mean that the pattern of injuries in children differ considerably from those in adults. Compared with adults, children have: smaller physical size, a relatively larger head, more compliant bones, a higher ratio of surface area to body weight, and epiphyses. Experience and an awareness of the patterns of paediatric injury will assist resuscitation efforts. The smaller size and physical proximity of internal organs frequently result in the dissipated forces causing injuries to multiple structures (multiple injuries). The compliance of the bony thoracic cage in children allows significant underlying organ injury without rib fractures. Similarly, certain injuries not uncommon in adults (eg rupture of the thoracic aorta) rarely occur in children.

Injury prevention

Terminology

The term 'accident' implies an unforeseen unintentional event, one which occurs by chance. The implication is that 'accidents' cannot be prevented. However, there is much evidence that 'accidents' are far from random events but are relatively predictable and amenable to prevention. For this reason, experts now prefer to avoid use of the terms 'accidents' and 'accident prevention' and refer to 'injury prevention' instead. Similarly, 'accident and emergency departments' have become 'emergency departments'.

Background

Injuries to children tend to occur more frequently in certain groups and at certain times:

- Boys sustain more injuries than girls.
- Injuries are associated with social deprivation.
- Injuries often occur at times of family stress and change (including marital disharmony, moving house, and holidays).

Prevention theory

Prevention of injury does not simply refer to physical injuries, but poisonings also. Injuries and/or the effects of injuries may be prevented in a number of different ways:

Primary prevention measures Stop injuries occurring, eg installing fences around domestic swimming pools may reduce drowning and locked medicine cabinets might prevent inadvertent poisoning.

Secondary prevention measures Reduce the extent of harm caused by an injurious event. The most obvious examples are helmets, seat belts, and air bags in the context of road traffic collisions.

Tertiary 'prevention' Includes first aid and hospital treatment, and aims to limit the effect of an injury after it has already happened (eg surgery to stop intra-abdominal haemorrhage, antidotes for certain poisons).

Prevention strategies and the role of ED staff

The focus of staff treating injured patients has understandably always been the injuries themselves ('tertiary prevention'). In addition to any possible issues of NAI, ED staff need to consider how future injuries to children might be prevented (eg by discussing with parents the benefits of bicycle helmets). In the context of an individual child, it may sometimes be appropriate to contact the GP/health visitor with a view to seeing if interventions might prevent future injuries to a particular child and siblings.

More general interventions include:

- Leaflets and posters in the waiting room to target a captive audience.
- Media involvement (eg to minimize risks of fireworks and sparklers).

Further details of children's injuries and injury prevention are available from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents ( <https://www.rospa.org.uk>) and the Child Accident Prevention Trust ( <https://www.capt.com>).

Resuscitation of the injured child

The priorities in managing major paediatric trauma (Airway, Breathing, Circulation) are the same as in adults (see Major trauma: treatment principles, p. 330). Staff accustomed to treating adults may have difficulty with equipment sizes and drug doses. Establish/estimate the child's weight (see Weight estimation, p. 649). Call for help as soon as a seriously injured child arrives (or is expected) in the ED—senior ED doctor, ICU/PICU doctor, and surgeon. It is often very helpful to seek the help of a paediatrician to assist with vascular access and calculation of drug doses, particularly for preschool children.

Apply pressure to stop catastrophic external haemorrhage, and give tranexamic acid slow IVI (15mg/kg, up to max 1g) as soon as possible.

Airway with cervical spine control

Clear and secure the airway (suction and adjuncts), and provide O₂ as required. If the airway is obstructed, use jaw thrust (not head tilt/chin lift), and call for expert help (senior ED/PICU/ICU) as intubation may be required. Ensure manual immobilization of the cervical spine is maintained whilst a patent airway is being obtained. When the airway is secure, consider the possibility of neck injury and the need for tape and sandbags until injury to the cervical spine has been excluded.

Breathing

Quickly exclude and treat life-threatening chest injuries. Children are prone to swallow air, placing them at risk of massive gastric dilatation (can cause ↓ BP and subsequent aspiration)—consider an orogastric tube.

Circulation with haemorrhage control

Hypotension is a late sign of hypovolaemia. Look for other evidence: tachycardia, tachypnoea, agitation, lethargy, and pale cold skin, with ↓ CRT (best elicited on the sternum). Get venous access (consider IO, as described in Intra-osseous infusion, pp. 656–7). Treat hypovolaemia by stopping haemorrhage (splinting fractures, applying pressure to wounds, prompt surgery) and giving IV blood. The approach to treat haemorrhage in trauma has changed in recent years—instead of giving large amounts of IV crystalloid, it is better to replace blood with blood. If blood products are not immediately available, give warmed 0.9% saline 10mL/kg IV.

If the child remains shocked, give 5mL/kg boluses of warmed packed red cells and FFP, aiming for a red cells:FFP ratio of 1:1.

Request a major haemorrhage pack (packed red cells, FFP, and platelets) and transfuse as required, monitoring Hb (aim no higher than 120g/L).

After blood products 40mL/kg, give platelets 10–15mL/kg IV—aim to keep the platelet count $>100 \times 10^9/L$.

After blood products 40mL/kg, give calcium chloride 0.1mL/kg IV—aim to keep ionized Ca²⁺ $>1\text{mmol}/L$.

Discuss the need for cryoprecipitate (10mL/kg) and activated factor VII with the haematologist.

Disability

Make a rapid assessment of the child's neurological status, using the 'AVPU' system (see Head injury: triage and monitoring, p. 364).

Exposure

Early complete inspection is mandatory, but subsequently cover the child as much as possible in order to ↓ anxiety and prevent excessive heat loss.

Analgesia

(See Analgesia in specific situations, pp. 290–1.)

Analgesia is often forgotten or not considered early enough, even with major injuries. Prompt and adequate analgesia given to injured children will gain their confidence, enhancing assessment and treatment. Give IV analgesia titrated according to response. Do not use IM or SC analgesia.

In severe pain, give morphine IV:

- Up to 100mcg/kg over 5min if 6–12 months.
- Up to 200mcg/kg over 5min if >12 months.

Certain fractures are amenable to LA nerve block techniques (eg femoral nerve block for femoral shaft fractures—see Femoral nerve block, p. 313). Nasal diamorphine (see Analgesia in specific situations, pp. 290–1) and Entonox® (see Analgesics: Entonox® and ketamine, p. 287) may also be useful for analgesia before IV access is available.

Further history

After completing the primary survey and initial resuscitation, gain a more detailed history of how the injury occurred, together with the personal history, including:

- Allergies.
- Medication.
- Past medical history (and immunizations).
- Last mealtime.
- Events and environment relating to the injury.

Imaging

A whole body ('pan') CT scan is the quickest way to determine the nature and extent of major injuries, but this needs to be balanced against the risk of a relatively large dose of radiation in a young person. Therefore, the team leader will aim to target CT to minimize radiation exposure. X-rays still have a role to play in some situations (see <https://rcr.ac.uk>).

Parents

Remember the parents' needs—allocate a member of staff to this task (see Interacting with parents, p. 648). Children who have suffered a traumatic event are at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder—inform the parents or guardians about this. Briefly describe possible symptoms (sleep disturbance, nightmares, difficulty concentrating, and irritability). Suggest to the parents/guardians that they contact the child's GP if symptoms persist beyond 1 month (see NICE guideline NG116, published 2018, available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk>).

Assessing head injuries in children

The principles of head injury management in children are the same as in adults (see Head injury: imaging, pp. 370; Management of serious head injury, pp. 372–3; Minor head injury, pp. 374–5), but there are some important differences (including the assessment of conscious level in small children).

Background

Of those children who die from trauma, most succumb to head injuries. Anatomical differences are relevant. In infants, unfused sutures allow the intracranial volume to ↑ with intracranial haemorrhage, causing relatively large bleeds and even shock. Similarly, scalp wounds in infants and young children may bleed profusely and can result in significant hypovolaemia.

Causes of head injury

Most head injuries in children are due to falls, but few of these cause serious injury. Severe head injury is often the result of a child running out in front of a vehicle. Some deaths are caused by NAI (see Head injuries, p. 760), especially in babies who have been shaken violently, dropped, or thrown.

Assessment of a head-injured child

History

Assessment of children may prove to be difficult. An isolated episode of vomiting after minor head injury is a frequent occurrence.

Record details of the injurious event, the time it occurred, and the condition of the child before and after the injury. Ascertain if the child was previously well. In particular, elicit any history of fits or bleeding disorder. An infection can render a child prone to falls and also cause subsequent symptoms—a small child who vomits after a fall may be suffering from otitis media, rather than the effects of a head injury.

Determine the condition of the child immediately after injury—if he cried at once, he did not lose consciousness. Record if he was unconscious, confused, or drowsy (and for how long), and whether he vomited or was unsteady or dizzy. Ask about headache. Remember to take into account the fact that a child might normally be asleep at the time he is examined.

Examination

To assess level of consciousness, use the standard GCS (see Glasgow coma score (adults), p. 369) for children aged ≥ 4 y.

Do not use the standard adult GCS in children aged <4 y—instead use the adapted scale (see Glasgow coma score (children), p. 737).

Exclude hypoglycaemia. Note whether the child looks well and is behaving normally. Measure pupil size and check reactivity. Examine the head for signs of injury, but also look for injuries elsewhere, particularly the neck. Check T°, and consider coexisting illness such as ear, throat, or urinary infections, or occasionally meningitis.

Glasgow coma score (children)

The 'Eye' and 'Motor' components of the GCS are similar as for adults (see Glasgow coma score (adults), p. 369), but a modified 'Verbal' score is used in small children. The paediatric version of the GCS is shown in Table 15.12 (see <https://www.nice.org.uk>). Assessment of the best verbal response is likely to require assistance from the parent/guardian/carer.

Table 15.12 Paediatric version of the Glasgow coma score

Best eye response	Score
Eyes opening spontaneously	4
Eyes opening to verbal command	3
Eyes opening to pain	2
No eye opening	1
Best verbal response	Score
Alert, babbles, coos, words, or sentences to usual ability	5
Less than usual ability and/or spontaneous irritable cry	4
Cries inappropriately	3
Occasionally whimpers and/or moans	2
No vocal response	1
Best motor response	Score
Obey commands or has normal spontaneous movements	6
Localizes to painful stimuli or withdraws to touch	5
Withdrawal to painful stimuli	4
Abnormal flexion to pain (decorticate)	3
Abnormal extension to pain (decerebrate)	2
No motor response to pain	1
Total	3–15

In pre-verbal or intubated patients, the 'best grimace response' may be used in place of the 'best verbal response', as shown in Table 15.13.

Table 15.13 'Best grimace response'

Score
Spontaneous normal facial/oro-motor activity
Less than usual spontaneous ability and/or only responds to touch
Vigorous grimace to pain
Mild grimace to pain
No response to pain

Managing head injuries in children

Investigation

When faced with a child with severe injuries, summon senior help and follow standard resuscitation guidelines (see Management of serious head injuries, pp. 372–3). If there is any suspicion of NAI, involve the paediatrician at an early stage (see Management of child abuse, pp. 762–3).

Indications for immediate CT scan

(See <https://www.nice.org.uk>)

- Suspicion of NAI.
- Post-traumatic seizure, with no history of epilepsy.
- GCS <14 on initial assessment or paediatric GCS <15 in infants <1yr.
- GCS <15 at 2hr after the injury.
- Suspected open or depressed skull fracture or tense fontanelle.
- Clinical evidence of base of skull fracture.
- Focal neurological signs.
- For children <1y: bruise, swelling, or laceration >5cm on the head.

If no indication for immediate CT, assess for risk factors

- Witnessed loss of consciousness >5min.
- Abnormal drowsiness.
- ≥3 discrete episodes of vomiting.
- Dangerous mechanism (high-speed road traffic collision, fall >3m, high-speed injury from object).
- Amnesia (antergrade or retrograde) lasting >5min (hard to assess in children <5y).

Action after assessing risk factors

- If >1 risk factor is present, obtain a CT scan.
- If one factor is present, observe for ≥4hr post-head injury—obtain a CT scan if, during observation, the child drops GCS to <15 and has further vomiting or further episodes of abnormal drowsiness.
- If no risk factor is present, no imaging is required, unless the child is taking an anticoagulant, in which case obtain a CT scan within 8hr of injury.

Management

Discuss children with abnormal CT scans with the neurosurgical team and treat accordingly.

Admit and observe children with continuing symptoms or signs, or an abnormal CT. When contemplating discharge, ensure adequate supervision from a responsible adult is available. Provide the parents with a verbal explanation and a written advice sheet (see Discharging patients, p. 375) (see also <https://www.sign.ac.uk> or <https://www.nice.org.uk>).

Transient cortical blindness after head injury

Occasionally, children present with blindness immediately or soon after an apparently minor head injury. The mechanism is unclear, but in most cases, blindness resolves spontaneously within a few hours. In the meantime, arrange a CT scan to exclude intracranial haematoma.

Spinal injury in children

Background

Cervical spine injury is relatively uncommon in children, but keep the spine immobilized until history, examination ± imaging exclude injury. Injuries in children tend to involve upper (C1–3 level), rather than lower, cervical spine. Rotatory subluxation may cause significant cervical spine injury without fracture—the clue is the combination of injury, neck pain, and torticollis. Interpretation of cervical spine X-rays in younger children is frequently complicated by pseudo-subluxation of C2 on C3 and of C3 on C4.

Imaging the cervical spine in children

In a child with a head injury, obtain an urgent cervical spine CT scan if any of the following criteria is present (<https://www.nice.org.uk>):

- GCS <13/15 on initial assessment.
- The child has been intubated.
- Focal peripheral neurological signs.
- Paraesthesiae in the arms or legs.
- A definitive diagnosis is required urgently (eg prior to surgery).
- Multiple injuries affecting >1 body region.
- Strong suspicion of injury despite normal X-rays.
- X-rays show a significant bony injury.
- X-rays are technically difficult or inadequate.

If there is neck pain/tenderness, but no indication for CT, get X-rays if there is a dangerous mechanism (eg high fall >1m or five stairs, high-speed crash, rollover, ejection). Perform an assessment of the spine if safe to do so and the patient has one ‘low-risk’ factor (also applies to adults):

- A crash involving a ‘simple’ rear-end collision.
- Comfortable in a sitting position in the ED.
- Ambulatory at any time since injury.
- There is no midline cervical tenderness.
- There is a delayed onset of pain.

On assessment of the spine, if the patient can actively rotate the neck 45° right and left, no imaging is needed; if unable to do this, obtain X-rays.

Spinal cord injury without radiological abnormality (SCIWORA)

The paediatric spine is inherently more elastic, so momentary intersegmental displacement may endanger the cord without disrupting bones or ligaments. This can result in spinal cord injury without radiological abnormality. Usually there are objective signs of injury, but these can be delayed. Therefore, if children present with transient neurological symptoms after neck injury, ensure careful assessment.

Considerations in paediatric trauma

Chest injury

Children have little respiratory reserve and can desaturate quickly. Significant thoracic visceral injuries may occur without rib fractures. There is a relatively high incidence of pulmonary contusion. In children with major trauma, obtain a CT scan; otherwise, if there is an isolated chest injury, consider obtaining a CXR (and then a CT scan only if that is abnormal).

If a chest drain is needed to treat a pneumothorax or haemothorax, use a size appropriate for the size of the child (as indicated by chart/tape).

Abdominal and pelvic injury

Check for hypovolaemia. Abdominal palpation cannot yield useful information until the child's co-operation and confidence are gained. Restrict any PR and PV examinations to the senior surgeon. Consider a CT scan if there is abdominal injury with hypovolaemia, abdominal bruising, tenderness or distension, or bleeding PR or via the NG tube. FAST scanning is not of proven benefit in paediatric abdominal injury, but formal USS may help (eg to help exclude an isolated splenic injury).

Gastric tubes can help to treat air swallowing and gastric dilatation prevalent in injured children. Insert an appropriately sized urinary catheter if urine cannot be passed spontaneously or if accurate output measurement is required (eg after severe burns).

Burns

Burns and smoke inhalation from house fires still cause death in many children each year. Even more frequently, children present with scalds from hot or boiling liquids. Most of these result from simple incidents in the home—ensure that treatment includes injury prevention advice for parents (see Injury prevention, p. 733). Remember that some (occasionally characteristic) burns may reflect NAI.

Assessment and treatment of the burnt child follow similar lines to those in adults; urgent priorities include securing the airway (with an uncut ET tube) and adequate analgesia (see Major trauma: treatment principles, p. 330).

IV fluid requirements in major burns depend upon the extent of the burn (use Lund–Browder charts for the appropriate age of the child—see Fig. 8.25) and clinical response (see Burns: assessment, p. 398).

Drowning and submersion incidents

Children continue to die from drowning each year despite improved swimming education. Their high surface area to body weight ratio makes them prone to hypothermia. Cardiac arrest after immersion warrants prolonged resuscitation (see Drowning and near drowning, pp. 268–9). Presume cervical spine injury and immobilize the neck. Prolonged submersion (>8min), no respiratory effort after 40min of CPR, persistent coma, persistent pH <7.0, and persistent $\text{PaO}_2 <8\text{kPa}$ imply a poor prognosis. Hypothermia favours a better prognosis. Of those who survive after hospital CPR, 70% do make a complete recovery.

Wounds in children

Some children may allow wounds to be explored, cleaned, and sutured under LA, providing they are given an appropriate explanation (sometimes it is worth demonstrating on a teddy first) and a parent is allowed to stay with them. Injection of LA is least painful if a fine needle is employed and the LA is warmed, buffered, and injected slowly. Some children, however, do not tolerate LA. Whilst some superficial wounds may be cleaned and closed (Steri-Strips™ or tissue glue) without anaesthesia, often sedation or GA is needed. Anaesthesia is important in order to allow adequate exploration and cleaning of the wound and to ↓ the risks of infection and tattooing from embedded dirt. Never allow a lack of co-operation to compromise treatment—this is particularly important with facial wounds where wound closure under GA may be needed to provide the best cosmetic result.

Ketamine

Ketamine can be used in the ED as an alternative to GA and provides excellent analgesia for undertaking minor procedures in children (see ↗ Analgesics: Entonox® and ketamine, p. 287) (see also the RCEM guideline 2016, available at: ↗ <https://www.rcem.ac.uk>). Ketamine should only be used by clinicians experienced in its use and capable of managing any airway complications.

Ketamine is *contraindicated* if:

- There is a high risk of laryngospasm (active respiratory infection, active asthma, age <12 months).
- There are severe psychological problems (cognitive or motor delay or severe behavioural problems).
- Cardiovascular disease (congenital heart disease, cardiomyopathy, ↑ BP).
- Significant head injury or neurological disease, porphyria, and hyperthyroidism.

Paediatric fractures and dislocations

Many paediatric fractures are similar to those in adults and prone to similar complications. Bones in children differ from those in adults in two important respects—they have epiphyses and are softer (hence fractures are more common than significant ligament injuries). Certain types of paediatric fractures reflect these differences:

Greenstick fracture An incomplete fracture in which one cortical surface of a bone breaks, whilst the other side bends.

Torus ('buckle') fracture Another form of incomplete fracture characterized by buckling of the cortex.

Plastic deformation ('bowing deformation') Traumatic bending of the long bone shaft without a visible fracture occasionally occurs in young children.

Epiphyseal injuries

Injuries to the traction epiphyses are avulsion injuries (eg peroneus brevis insertion into the base of the fifth MT).

Injuries to the pressure epiphyses at the end of long bones adjacent to the articular surface have been classified into five types—the Salter–Harris classification (see Fig. 15.23):

- **Type I:** the epiphysis separates or slips on the metaphysis.
- **Type II:** a small piece of metaphysis separates with the epiphysis (most common type—see Fig. 15.24).
- **Type III:** a vertical fracture through the epiphysis joins that through the epiphyseal plate (see Fig. 15.25).
- **Type IV:** a fracture passes from the articular surface through the epiphyseal plate into the metaphysis (see Fig. 15.26).
- **Type V:** a crush injury to the epiphyseal plate (X-rays may be normal).

Note that Salter–Harris types I and V may not be apparent on the initial X-ray. Undisplaced type I fractures often affect the distal tibia and fibula and may present with circumferential tenderness around the growth plate. Treat with POP and immobilization according to clinical findings.

Epiphyseal growth plate injury

A concern specific to any epiphyseal injury is that premature fusion of a growth plate may result, with resultant limb shortening and deformity. The risk correlates to some extent with the mechanism of injury and amount of force involved. The different Salter–Harris fractures carry a different level of risk of long-term growth plate problems. The risk is low for types I and II (particularly if undisplaced), moderate for type III, and highest for types IV and V. Problems are usually averted if Salter–Harris type III and IV injuries are accurately reduced and held (eg by internal fixation). Type V fractures are notoriously difficult to diagnose and often complicated by premature fusion—fortunately, they are relatively rare.

Dislocations

Dislocated joints are relatively unusual in children. Most commonly involved are the patella (see Paediatric knee injuries, p. 753) or the radial head ('pulled elbow'—see Elbow injuries in children, p. 750). Similarly, due to the relative strengths of bone and ligament, injuries to ligaments are much less common in children than in adults.

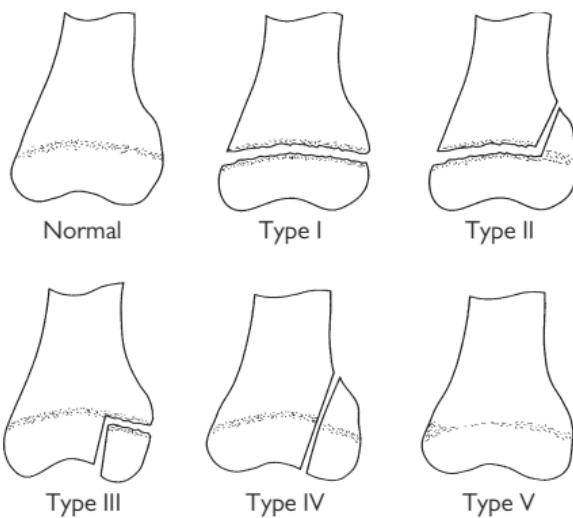


Fig. 15.23 Salter-Harris classification of epiphyseal injuries.



Fig. 15.24 Salter-Harris II fracture of the distal radius in an 11y old.



Fig. 15.26 Salter-Harris IV fracture of the distal tibia in a 15y old.



Fig. 15.25 Salter-Harris III fracture of the proximal phalanx of the big toe in a 14y old.

Approach to limb injuries in children

Limb injuries are very common in children. Whilst most of the points outlined in the general approach to trauma in adults may be successfully applied, certain modifications may be required.

History

Carefully elicit the mechanism of injury. The history may be confused or not forthcoming—try to establish a rapport with the child (and parents) nevertheless, in order to gain the child's confidence for the examination.

Examination

Search for evidence of a fracture (swelling, deformity, bony tenderness) and any associated neurovascular injury. Remember the adage that the most easily missed fracture is the second fracture—examine also for additional injuries to adjacent bones and joints.

Is an X-ray required?

If in doubt, obtain an X-ray. The ease with which children's bones fracture and the difficulties with history and examination mean that it is sensible to adopt a low threshold for requesting X-rays. Ensure that two views at right angles are taken (eg AP and lateral), including associated joints.

Interpreting X-rays

Many fractures are subtle and easily missed. To minimize the chance of this occurring, visually trace around the cortex of each bone, looking for any irregularities. Interpretation of paediatric X-rays is complicated by the presence of various ossification centres and accessory ossicles. Both are commonly mistaken for fractures (eg the olecranon epiphysis, the os trigonum, and the bipartite patella). Ossification centres appear and fuse in a relatively predictable fashion, although the rate at which this occurs varies slightly from child to child (see Table 15.14). Knowledge of this process, combined with experience of seeing many paediatric X-rays, greatly assists interpretation. If in doubt about an X-ray, obtain a second opinion (there is no justification for X-raying the uninjured side to see what 'normal' is). As an additional safeguard, most EDs now operate a policy of all X-rays being reported by a radiologist or reporting radiographer within 24hr.

Treatment

Give prompt, appropriate analgesia (see  Analgesia, p. 735). Follow the treatment suggested for specific fractures (see  p. 747). Many undisplaced fractures will unite satisfactorily with a period of immobilization in POP (eg fractured distal radius), collar and cuff (eg fractured radial head), or broad arm sling (eg fractured clavicle). Minor angulation at the fracture site can be accepted, particularly in young children. Often, however, angulated fractures require MUA.

Open fractures and dislocations

Give analgesia and IV antibiotics (eg cefuroxime 25mg/kg slow IV bolus), and ensure tetanus cover. Take a digital photograph of the wound and keep it covered to minimize the risk of infection. Apply a dressing, splint the injured limb, and refer the patient to the orthopaedic surgeon.

Table 15.14 Ossification centres

Centre	First appears	Fuses
Humeral head	0–6 months	18–21y
Capitulum	3–6 months	14–16y
Medial epicondyle	4–7y	18–21y
Lateral epicondyle	9–13y	14–16y
Trochlea	9–10y	14–16y
Radial head	4–5y	14–17y
Distal radius	6–12 months	17–19y
Olecranon	9–11y	13–16y
Distal ulna	4–5y	16–18y
Capitate	Birth to 3 months	—
Hamate	Birth to 4 months	—
Triquetral	1–3y	—
Lunate	2–4y	—
Trapezium	2–4y	—
Trapezoid	3–5y	—
Scaphoid	3–5y	—
Pisiform	9–12y	—
First MC base	1–3y	14–17y
Femoral head	Birth to 6 months	15–19y
Greater trochanter	3–4y	17–19y
Lesser trochanter	11–14y	15–18y
Distal femur	Birth	17–20y
Patella	2–6y	4–8y
Proximal tibia	Birth	15–18y
Distal tibia	Birth to 6 months	14–17y
Proximal fibula	2–4y	16–19y
Distal fibula	Birth to 1y	14–17y
Posterior calcaneum	5–8y	13–16y
Central calcaneum	Birth	13–16y
Talus	Birth	—
Navicular	2–3y	—
Cuneiform bones	1–3y	—

These dates are subject to individual variation. In general, epiphyses in girls fuse before those in boys.

Normal X-rays in children

It is useful to have an idea of the normal appearance of X-rays in children. Some examples are shown in Figs. 15.27–15.30.

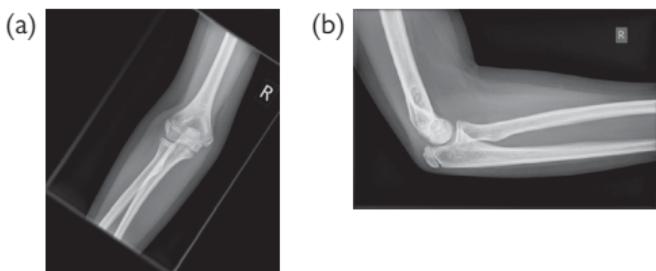


Fig. 15.27 (a), (b) Normal elbow in a 10y old.



Fig. 15.28 Normal pelvis X-ray in a 6y old boy.



Fig. 15.29 Normal ankle X-rays in a 10y old.



Fig. 15.30 Normal foot in a 2y old.

Shoulder and humeral shaft fractures

Clavicle fracture

This is a common injury in children and adults alike. Most clavicle fractures with no or only minor angulation/displacement heal satisfactorily with conservative management, comprising oral analgesia and rest in a broad arm sling. Follow-up is not usually necessary—give the child/parents an advice leaflet with a contact telephone number to call if there are questions/problems (see  Fracture clinic and alternatives, pp. 436–7). The advice leaflet should include the following advice:

- Use the sling for 3 weeks and painkillers as required. Extra pillows to support the arm may help in the first few days.
- Start exercises of the hand, wrist, and elbow as early as possible.
- Expect a lump (callus) to form at the fracture site.
- Avoid rough play and contact sports for 6 weeks.
- To seek medical attention if the child becomes suddenly short of breath or if there is a problem involving the skin over the fracture.

Sometimes a clavicle fracture is strongly suspected clinically, but not apparent on X-ray—treat as for an undisplaced fracture.

Treat children who have comminuted, very angulated, or displaced fractures (see Fig. 15.31) similarly, but check carefully for neurovascular damage and the X-ray for associated rib fractures and pneumothorax. Arrange fracture clinic follow-up.

Acromio-clavicular joint injuries

These become more common in older children. Treat with analgesia, rest, sling, and physiotherapy/follow-up as for adults (see  Acromio-clavicular (AC) joint injuries, p. 471).

Shoulder injuries

Shoulder dislocations are relatively rare in children. Salter–Harris type I and II epiphyseal fractures may occur in the proximal humerus—refer to the orthopaedic team if significant displacement or $>20^\circ$ angulation. Otherwise, give analgesia, collar and cuff, and fracture clinic follow-up.

Humeral shaft fracture

Check particularly for injury to the radial nerve which runs close to the humeral shaft in the spiral groove. Remember to consider the possibility of NAI, especially if the patient is <3 years old or the fracture is spiral. Treat as for adults (see  Shaft of humerus fracture, p. 465) with analgesia, backslab POP, and sling support, with fracture clinic follow-up.



Fig. 15.31 A 13y old with a displaced clavicle fracture.

Supracondylar humeral fracture

This follows a fall on an outstretched hand. Swelling may be considerable. Check for associated neurovascular deficit (particularly brachial artery and median and radial nerves). 25% of supracondylar fractures are undisplaced and may not be obvious on X-ray, although a joint effusion will be seen. Most fractures are displaced, angulated, or rotated. The extent of angulation (both in sagittal and coronal planes) is easy to underestimate. Viewed from laterally, the capitulum normally makes an angle of 45° with the humeral shaft (see Fig. 15.32). The anterior humeral line (drawn along the front of the humeral shaft on the lateral view) normally passes through the middle of the ossification centre of the capitulum in the distal humerus. Also, the normal carrying angle (seen in AP view) is 10°. Record the radial pulse frequently, and consider compartment syndrome.

Treatment

Provide analgesia (eg nasal diamorphine), and refer for manipulation under GA if:

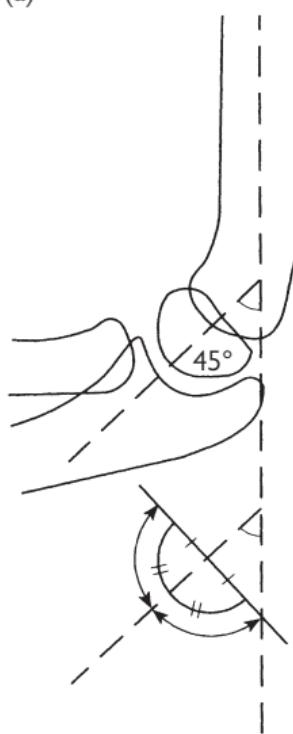
- Neurovascular deficit: operation is urgent if circulation is compromised.
- >50% displacement (see Fig. 15.33).
- >20° angulation of the distal part posteriorly (see Fig. 15.34).
- >10° medial or lateral angulation.

If there is no indication for manipulation under GA, refer for admission and observation if there is much swelling. If no significant angulation, displacement, or swelling, discharge with analgesia, a collar and cuff under a body bandage (elbow at 90°, with confirmed radial pulse present), and fracture clinic follow-up. Consider using a padded backslab POP if significant pain is present.

Complications

Malunion with persistent deformity, stiffness (including myositis ossificans), neurovascular deficit (eg Volkmann's contracture).

(a)



(b)



Fig. 15.32 Normal lateral view—the capitulum makes an angle of 45° with the humeral shaft.

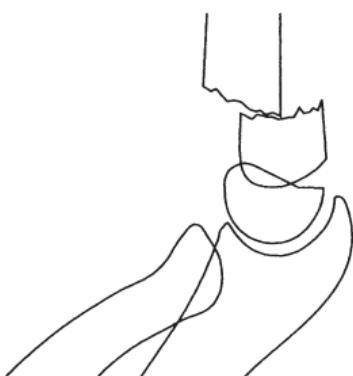


Fig. 15.33 Supracondylar fracture with >20° angulation and ~50% displacement.



Fig. 15.34 A 4y old with a supracondylar fracture with >20° angulation and >100% displacement.

Elbow injuries in children

Lateral epicondylar epiphyseal injury

Salter–Harris type II injury may follow a fall on an outstretched hand. The elbow is swollen, with ↓ movement and maximum tenderness on the lateral aspect. X-rays demonstrate the fracture, which may be displaced by the pull of the forearm extensors, requiring surgical reduction. Treat undisplaced fractures with a long arm backslab POP, collar and cuff at 90°, analgesia, and fracture clinic follow-up.

Medial epicondylar epiphyseal injury

Maximal tenderness is apparent on the medial side of the elbow. Check carefully for ulnar nerve damage. Refer immediately if the ulnar nerve is involved or if the fracture is displaced. Treat undisplaced fractures with analgesia, collar and cuff at 90° under clothes (confirm the radial pulse is present), and fracture clinic follow-up.

Radial head/neck fracture

The radiocapitellar line is drawn down the axis of the proximal radius on the lateral view of the elbow and should bisect the capitellum. Failure to do so suggests an occult radial neck fracture or radial head dislocation. Most of these fractures can be managed satisfactorily with analgesia, collar and cuff, advice leaflet, and no need for follow-up (see  Elbow injuries, pp. 462–3). Refer to the fracture clinic if there is significant angulation.

Elbow injury without obvious fracture

Treat elbow injuries where there is clinical suspicion of fracture, but none seen on X-ray, along the same lines as for an undisplaced fracture (analgesia, collar and cuff, advice leaflet, no follow-up). This includes children who have ↓ range of movement and whose X-rays show an elbow effusion ('fat pad sign') (see  Elbow injuries, pp. 462–3).

Subluxation of the radial head ('pulled elbow')

A direct pull on the arm of a child aged 1–5y may result in the radial head being pulled out of the annular ligament ('nursemaid's elbow'). The child then refuses to use the arm. If there is a characteristic history, there is no need to X-ray. The traditional reduction technique involves flexing the elbow to 90°, then supinating the elbow fully. However, manipulating the elbow into full pronation may give a better reduction rate ( <https://www.bestbets.org.uk>). A click is sometimes felt or heard during reduction. If full pronation fails, try full supination and leave for 10min. Allow the child to play and watch—he will usually use the arm again soon. If he does not, obtain X-rays and senior help. Repeat manipulation can be done once, but if that does not lead to a rapid improvement in function, then place the arm in a sling; give analgesia, and arrange review in 1–2 days. The elbow may reduce spontaneously or may need further manipulation. Rarely, repeated manipulation is unsuccessful until sedation is given. After successful manipulation, advise the parents to avoid pulling the arm forcefully. A pulled elbow may recur up to about age 5y if the arm is pulled, but after that the child should have no long-term problems with the elbow.

Forearm and wrist injuries

Radius/ulna shaft fractures

Radius and ulna shaft fractures often cause significant displacement or angulation—provide IV analgesia (or nasal diamorphine), immobilize in a broad arm sling, obtain X-rays, and refer for manipulation under GA. Never accept an isolated forearm shaft fracture without X-rays demonstrating the entire radius and ulna; otherwise, a Monteggia or Galeazzi fracture-dislocation may be missed (see Forearm fractures and related injury, pp. 460–1).

Distal radial fracture (including Salter–Harris type II injuries)

A common fracture in all ages of children (and adults) after a fall on an outstretched hand. The fracture results in localized tenderness and variable swelling. Check carefully for a second injury (eg involving the thumb or scaphoid). X-rays will demonstrate the nature of the fracture.

Salter–Harris type II fractures

Often have displacement of the distal radial epiphysis (eg see Fig. 15.24), in which case, refer for MUA under GA.

Moderate displacement or slight angulation

May be accepted (particularly in younger children): if in doubt, treat in a backslab POP and arrange fracture clinic follow-up.

Minimally displaced or undisplaced greenstick, buckle, or torus fractures

Commonly occur just proximal to the distal radial epiphysis. Treat with analgesia, elevation, a wrist splint, and written advice, with no follow-up unless problems arise (see Fracture clinic and alternatives, pp. 436–7). Treat children who present with discrete tenderness over the distal radial growth plate, but no fracture apparent on X-ray, identically to those with a radiologically proven fracture—presume a growth plate injury (sometimes a subperiosteal haematoma can be seen on USS). Beware osteomyelitis, which can cause tenderness over the distal radius and be mistaken for trauma. Parents and children report better functioning and fewer days off school with the use of removable splints, compared with POPs, for minor wrist fractures. Advise that the splint should be retained until pain wears off (usually <3 weeks) and that follow-up is not required if pain settles as expected.

Scaphoid fracture

Despite being uncommon, particularly in younger children, seek clinical evidence of scaphoid fracture in any child with wrist/forearm injury and obtain scaphoid views if appropriate (see Scaphoid fracture, pp. 450–1). Treat radiologically evident and suspected fractures as for adults, as described in Scaphoid fracture, pp. 450–1.

Metacarpal and phalangeal injuries

Treat these injuries along similar lines to those described for adults (see Hand fractures and dislocations, pp. 444–5). Remember, however, that children may not tolerate manipulation under LA—anaesthetic help may be required.

Hip and femoral fractures in children

Hip fracture

Children rarely sustain neck of femur fractures similar to those seen in adults. In the pre-adolescent child, trauma may precipitate a slipped upper femoral epiphysis (see [The painful hip, pp. 728–9](#)). Younger children who have been subjected to considerable violence may suffer a Salter–Harris type I injury to the proximal femoral epiphysis—carefully exclude other injuries and refer to the orthopaedic surgeon.

Femoral shaft fracture

May be spiral (the majority) or transverse, depending upon the mechanism of injury (see Figs. 15.35 and 15.36). Considerable energy is required to break a femur—check for other injuries. Resuscitate as necessary with IV fluids and provide nasal diamorphine (see [Nasal diamorphine for analgesia in children, p. 291](#)) or IV opioid analgesia (see [Analgesia in specific situations, pp. 290–1](#)). Perform a femoral nerve block (as described in [Femoral nerve block, p. 313](#)) to provide additional analgesia, using 0.2mL/kg of 0.5% plain bupivacaine (1mg/kg). Allow 20min for this to work, then apply skin traction. Gallows traction may be used on infants and children <2y but is best erected on the ward. A true spiral fracture in a non-ambulatory child suggests child abuse—swelling is often not dramatic.



Fig. 15.35 Femoral shaft fracture in a 3y old.



Fig. 15.36 A 9 month old with a transverse fracture of the distal femur.

Paediatric knee injuries

Knee injuries

Knee ligament injuries are rare in children, compared with adults—suspect a fracture or epiphyseal injury instead. This is a reflection of the relative strengths of the ligament and bone in the child. So, for example, an injury which might cause anterior cruciate ligament rupture in the adult will often produce avulsion of its tibial attachment in the child. This tibial plateau fracture will produce a haemarthrosis and will be apparent on the lateral X-ray. Provide analgesia and refer to the orthopaedic surgeon.

Patella fractures

Do not confuse a congenitally bipartite patella for a fracture. The small bony fragment in a bipartite patella lies superolaterally and has rounded edges.

Patellar sleeve fractures

These are not uncommon in children and adolescents. These osteochondral fractures typically result from high-impact jumping activities or sports. Suspect clinically if there is local pain and tenderness and an inability to actively extend the knee. X-rays can be misleading as only a small bony fragment is avulsed, usually from the inferior pole; however, a large part of the articular surface is removed with it but is impossible to see on plain X-ray. Provide analgesia and splintage, and refer to the orthopaedic team for MRI to confirm the diagnosis ± ORIF.

Patella dislocation

This is seen relatively frequently in children and is treated in a similar way to that in adults (see  Dislocations of the patella and knee, p. 490). Examine the X-rays carefully, as associated osteochondral 'chip' fractures of the undersurface of the patella occur relatively frequently in children. Refer for fracture clinic follow-up and MRI to establish the extent of the injury.

Tibial fractures in children

Tibial shaft fracture

Treat most fractures as for adults—splintage, IV analgesia, and referral for elevation and admission. Compound fractures require IV antibiotics and wound surgery. Displaced or angulated fractures require MUA and POP; undisplaced fractures respond to treatment with above-knee non-weight-bearing POP and subsequent mobilization using crutches.

Toddler's fracture

Minor trauma in 1–4y olds may result in characteristic spiral undisplaced distal tibial fractures (see Fig. 15.37). These may not be apparent on the initial X-rays—localized warmth and tenderness with a history of trauma may suggest the diagnosis in the otherwise wide differentials of the limping child (see The limping child, pp. 726–7). If a fracture is visible on initial X-rays, treat by rest in a POP and arrange fracture clinic follow-up. If the diagnosis is made without a visible fracture, treat in POP and review clinically and radiologically at 10 days—further X-rays may then demonstrate a long strip of new periosteal tibial bone formation. Continue to treat according to symptoms.



Fig. 15.37 An 18 month old with an oblique ('toddler's') fracture of the distal tibia which is hard to see. Note the adjacent white horizontal (Harris) growth arrest lines of no relevance to this injury.

Ankle and foot injuries in children

Ankle injuries

Ankle ligament injuries are less common in children than in adults, partly reflecting the fact that ligaments are often stronger than the bone to which they attach. The presence of epiphyses can make it difficult to establish whether or not a fracture is present on X-rays. If there is no obvious fracture on X-ray, but there is much tenderness/swelling over the distal tibial or fibular epiphysis, treat it as a growth plate injury (undisplaced Salter–Harris type I fracture) with BKPOP, crutches, elevation, analgesia, and follow-up in the ED or fracture clinic. Some fractures (see, for example, Fig. 15.38) require admission for manipulation under GA.

Foot injuries

A wide range of foot injuries occur in children. A common difficulty is distinguishing between the normal apophysis at the base of the fifth MT (see Fig. 15.39) and a fracture. The normal apophysis is typically longitudinally parallel to the fifth MT (as opposed to a fracture which is typically transverse or oblique—as shown in Fig. 9.7).

Calcaneal injuries

(See  Foot fractures and dislocations, pp. 504–5.)



Fig. 15.38 Ankle fracture in a 12y old.



Fig. 15.39 Normal foot in an 11y old.

Child abuse

The boundaries of what defines acceptable behaviour and what constitutes child abuse are open to some debate and are certainly affected by historical and cultural factors. For example, corporal punishment, once considered normal and usual, is now unacceptable. The extremes of child abuse, however, are easily defined. There is ↑ evidence that adverse childhood experiences (including abuse) can have negative effects on individuals throughout the rest of their lives.

Types of child abuse

- Physical abuse/NAI—including bruises, fractures, wounds, burns, poisoning, suffocation, FGM, fabricated or induced illness.
- Neglect.
- Emotional abuse.
- Child sexual abuse.

Prevalence

It is impossible to be sure how common child abuse is. It is generally agreed that it is much more prevalent than was previously believed. 4% of children are brought to the attention of professional agencies for suspected abuse. It is estimated by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) that over 500,000 children are abused in the UK each year.

Aetiology

Child abuse affects both boys and girls. The first-born child is more frequently affected. Disabled children are particularly vulnerable to abuse or neglect. Infants and young children are at most risk of serious injury or death, partly reflecting their physical vulnerability. The abuser is often a parent or cohabitant of a parent, more commonly ♂, and may have suffered abuse themselves as a child. Sometimes the child may be targeted because they are unwanted (eg 'she should have been a boy'). Whilst the abuser may be a young parent with unrealistic expectations and living in difficult socio-economic circumstances (unemployment, alcohol/drug abuse, poor living conditions), often they do not conform to this standard description. Child abuse affects all levels of society.

Clear links have been identified between domestic abuse and physical abuse of children. Children whose parents have mental health problems may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The 'toxic trio' of domestic abuse, mental health issues, and substance misuse has been identified as comprising recurrent common factors in families where child abuse has occurred. The term 'developmental trauma' has been used to describe the impact of early, repeated abuse, neglect, separation, and adverse experiences within a child's important relationships ( <https://www.beaconhouse.org.uk>).

Child behaviour as indicators of child abuse

Consider the possibility of child abuse or neglect (current or past) if a child exhibits any of the following:

- Alcohol and substance misuse (including overdosing).
- Bullying/being bullied.
- Self-harm.
- Developmental delay.
- Eating disorder.
- Escalating or concerning behaviours (violence/aggression, inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviours).
- Features of neglect: failing to attend appointments ('was not brought'), failure to thrive, inappropriate clothing, poor appearance/hygiene.
- Missing episodes and/or exclusion from school.
- Poor or deteriorating parent/peer interactions and/or relationships.

Role of the junior ED clinician

Managing the child and family where there is suspected child abuse is an extremely delicate skill, requiring considerable tact and experience. The role of the junior clinician is to consider the possibility of child abuse and to involve senior staff at an early stage—see relevant NICE guidance (<https://www.nice.org.uk>) updated in 2017.

The 2018 publication '*Working together to safeguard children*' outlines how protecting children is everyone's responsibility and should follow a child-centred approach.

The suspicious history

Certain features should alert to the possibility of child abuse:

- Injuries inconsistent with the history given.
- Injuries inappropriate for developmental age, paying particular consideration to non-mobile babies (eg a baby aged <4 months 'rolled off a bed').
- Changing history of injury or vague history, lacking vivid details.
- Delay in seeking medical attention.
- Concerning parental attitudes (eg apparent lack of concern for child).
- Frequent ED attendances.
- Occasionally, children may verbally disclose abuse. It is paramount to document the voice of the child—capture the child's disclosure in their own words in 'inverted commas'.

Child criminal exploitation and trafficking

Child criminal exploitation may involve individual groups or gangs manipulating, exploiting, or coercively controlling children into the supply and distribution of drugs from cities to rural locations using mobile phone lines (County lines). Children and young people may present to unscheduled health care settings due to being victims of extreme violence from gang members. County lines can be linked to modern slavery and the sexual exploitation of children.

Children and young people may be trafficked for a variety of reasons, including sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and domestic servitude. If suspected, refer to social care and the police to investigate.

Presentation of child abuse: bruising

Physical child abuse is commonly referred to as NAI. Children may present with a variety of injuries, which may occur in isolation or in combination.

Bruising

Children naturally sustain bruises during minor incidents as part of 'growing up'. Bruising over the knees and shins is a normal finding in children, particularly toddlers, who are also prone to sustaining injuries to their foreheads and chins as a result of falls. Older children frequently sustain bruises over the lateral aspect of their elbows and hips, during normal play and sport activities. Bruises in non-mobile babies, however, deserve particular attention and investigation.

As well as considering the possibility of NAI, remember that bruising may occur as part of an unusual pathological disease process (eg Henoch–Schönlein purpura, haemophilia, ITP, leukaemia, and other causes of thrombocytopenia). A Mongolian blue spot is an innocuous congenital finding on the lower back of some young children (especially non-Caucasians), which may be confused with bruising.

The following features warrant prompt consideration of NAI:

- Bruising in unusual sites (eg medial aspect of upper arms or thighs).
- Bruising in non-mobile babies.
- Multiple bruising of different ages (very difficult for the non-expert to judge) at less common sites.
- Uncommon injuries bilaterally.
- Finger 'imprinting' (eg grip complexes around upper limbs or slap marks).
- Imprints or marks from other objects (eg belt, stick).
- Human bite marks (probably adult if canines >3cm apart—ensure photographs next to a ruler are planned after admission).
- Petechiae on the face may reflect smothering and asphyxiation (it has been previously suggested that 2–10% of SIDS may have been smothered), but remember that petechiae also occur with forceful coughing or vomiting.

Natural progression of bruises

Swelling and tenderness of bruising suggest a relatively recent origin, but this is not very reliable. Accurate assessment of the age of bruising according to its colour is not possible, except that a yellow bruise is almost certainly >18hr old. Oft-quoted natural temporal progression of colour changes of bruising allows only a guess at the age of a bruise—avoid being drawn on this issue, which may have considerable legal implications. Instead, record the findings as accurately as possible—describe the colour, size, and distribution of the bruising. Usually a child suspected of having suffered physical abuse will also be examined by a relevant expert such as a paediatrician and/or a forensic physician (previously called 'police surgeon').

Child abuse: fractures

Fractures occur in a significant proportion of physically abused children—studies quote figures ranging from 11% to 55%, with ~80% of these fractures occurring in children aged <18 months.

Certain fractures are very common in children. Pay attention to the history of injury and whether or not it appears to be consistent with the fracture(s) sustained. Multiple fractures of different ages (especially if previously undiagnosed and/or not brought to medical attention) should arouse suspicion of NAI.

To help assess the approximate age of a bony injury, see Table 15.15, but bear in mind the fact that the times quoted are approximate and vary according to the age of the child.

Table 15.15 Natural progression of fractures

Presence of soft tissue swelling	0–10 days
Periosteal new bone formation	10–14 days
Loss of definition of the fracture line	14–21 days
Callus formation	14–42 days
Remodelling	~1y

Fractures arousing particular suspicion

The following fracture patterns are particularly suggestive of NAI:

- Multiple fractures of different ages.
- Rib and spinal fractures.
- Fractures in infants who are not independently mobile.
- Long bone fractures in children <3y old.
- Epiphyseal separation and metaphyseal ‘chip’ fractures of the knee, wrist, elbow, and ankle. These Salter–Harris type I and II injuries are associated with traction, rotation, and shaking.

Note that a few rare bone diseases may mimic NAI

- Osteogenesis imperfecta (blue sclerae, dental abnormalities, and brittle bones—autosomal dominant).
- Pathological fractures (through multiple cystic bone lesions).
- Rickets (enlarged, cupped epiphyses, craniotabes, ‘bow legs’).
- Copper deficiency (eg Menkes’ kinky hair syndrome).

Child abuse: head injuries, wounds and burns

Head injuries

Most head injuries result from unintentional incidents ('accidents'). In infants, they often result from the parent or carer dropping the child. The skull fractures caused by this tend to be single and linear and involve the parietal bone.

Consider NAI if the following occur:

- Retinal haemorrhages (characteristic, but not diagnostic of shaking—they may also rarely be seen in CO poisoning, for example). In the context of NAI, retinal haemorrhages are often associated with subdural haematomas.
- Occipital skull fracture.
- Multiple, wide, or comminuted fractures.
- Subdural haematoma in an infant or toddler.

Wounds and burns

Children commonly sustain wounds and burns unintentionally. However, deliberately inflicted burns are found in a significant proportion of physically abused children.

The following suggest the possibility of NAI:

- Torn frenulum of upper lip (can also reflect a 'normal' toddler injury).
- Perineal wounds and burns (see  Sexual abuse, p. 761).
- Small, deep, circular burns with raised edges suggest cigarette burns.
- Hand, lower limb, and buttock burns may follow forced immersion in bath water that is too hot. These burns tend to be of the 'stocking and glove' type, without higher splash burns. Parts of the buttocks may be spared where skin has been in contact with the bath, not the water.

Fabricated or induced illness

Previously known as 'Munchausen syndrome by proxy', this describes the situation where a parent/carer may invent a history of illness in a child and fabricate physical signs to substantiate it. The history often involves one or more of the following: apnoeic episodes, fits, bowel disturbances, rashes, allergies, or fevers. Classically, the deceiver is the mother. The child may be made ill by administering drugs or poisons. If suspected, do not confront the deceiver, but take blood and urine samples for a toxicology screen and refer to the paediatric team.

Bear in mind that some parents may be naturally very anxious and may exaggerate symptoms, rather than deliberately fabricate them.

Neglect

The neglected child may be dirty and unkempt, fail to thrive, and/or fall below the third centile for height and weight. Occasionally, nutritional deficiencies may be extreme (eg rickets). Developmental milestones are often delayed (and may even regress).

Emotional abuse

Ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child is sometimes referred to as psychological abuse. It can cause significant harm to the child development. It can involve deliberately humiliating, isolating, or ignoring a child.

There will likely be an element of emotional abuse as part of other forms of abuse, which may be manifest in various ways: personality/behavioural changes, sleep disturbance, soiling, and nocturnal enuresis.

Note the apparent attitudes of the parents/carers towards their child (eg critical and hostile or remote and unconcerned) and the child's attitude to the parents/carers (if in doubt as to whether this seems appropriate, ask an experienced nurse).

Sexual abuse

This may affect boys or girls and takes many forms. Child sexual abuse can be contact or non-contact, ranging from exposure to indecent acts, grooming online, through to rape. The abuser is often a ♂ relative or carer who is well known to the child, but women are also capable of committing sexual abuse, as are other children.

The child may present in a variety of ways:

- Injury to the genitalia or anus.
- Perineal pain, discharge, or bleeding.
- Behavioural disturbance, enuresis, and encopresis.
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- The child may allege sexual abuse.
- STI (including anogenital warts).
- Pregnancy.
- Repeated UTIs.

Accurately record statements made by the child 'word for word' using quotation marks. Do not pursue a genital examination, but involve a senior doctor at an early stage. The ED staff will aim to treat injuries that need urgent attention, but to defer examination of the genitalia using a colposcope to the relevant forensic experts. Bear in mind that in the context of an allegation of recent sexual assault, a collection of forensic samples for DNA analysis is likely to be required, so ensure that appropriate advice is given to avoid destroying evidence. Refer to local policies and procedures regarding recent and historical disclosures of child sexual abuse.

Management of child abuse

Role of the junior ED doctor and nurse

Junior ED staff need to be vigilant in considering abuse when initially assessing and treating children. See NICE guidance, updated in 2017, on when to suspect maltreatment ( <https://www.nice.org.uk>).

Any suspicion of child abuse should prompt the involvement of an expert senior doctor (paediatrician or ED consultant). In every hospital system, there will be a designated doctor for child protection who is available for advice. He or she will examine the child and arrange hospital admission for further investigations (eg skeletal survey) as necessary. Social care and the police may need to be involved. The child may require examination by a forensic physician, and samples/photographs obtained. Follow local procedures for making a social care multi-agency referral.

The chief consideration is treatment and protection of the child, so do not delay treatment of painful or life-threatening problems, whilst awaiting an 'expert'. Ensure that all documentation is legible and meticulous (use body maps). Remember that siblings may also be at risk.

UK law: The Children Act 1989 and 2004

These Acts replace previous statutes. Central is the concept that the welfare of the child is paramount. In the short term, the 1989 Children Act may be used to obtain orders to protect children. A variety of orders may be obtained.

Police Protection Order

A police officer has legal powers to take any child into 'police protection' for up to 72hr if deemed necessary for his/her own protection. This order may be used to prevent a child from being taken away from the ED by a parent or guardian against medical advice.

Emergency Protection Order

This has replaced the 'Place of Safety Order'. A court order valid for up to 8 days may be obtained if the child is believed to be at significant risk of harm. Such an order would normally be requested by a social worker.

Child Assessment Order

This court order may be applied by the local authority or NSPCC in order to allow an assessment to be performed of a child who appears to be at risk of injury. This order is valid for up to 7 days.

Care Order

This transfers the care of a child from the parent(s) to the local authority's social care department. If a care order is in force, matters requiring parental consent should be referred to the social worker (not the foster carer). Care orders can last until the child is 18y old. Parental responsibility can be transferred to another person through adoption or special guardianship via a court order. Only the courts are able to lift this order.

Residence Order

This court order defines where a child should live and who has parental responsibility.

Child Protection Plan

The details of all children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan are maintained by social care. ED staff should be aware of how to access Child Protection Plan information. Refer to local hospital alert systems. Previous hospital case notes are also very useful in this respect. When searching for previous records, remember that many children may be known by several surnames.

Child protection case conferences

A conference may be called by social care if it is suspected that a child has been abused. Child protection case conferences should be held promptly and aim to define a protection plan for the future protection of the child and family. Unlike the criminal courts, where the onus is on the prosecution to prove abuse 'beyond reasonable doubt', child protection case conferences will determine whether a child is deemed to be at risk of significant harm and whether a protection plan is required. Case conferences consist of a number of individuals, including: an independent chairman (usually a senior member of the social care department), a hospital consultant, a GP, a social worker, the police, a health visitor/school nurse, a teacher, an education welfare officer, and a local authority solicitor. Parents are always invited and older children may also attend.

Sharing information

Failure to share information is implicated in many serious case reviews—Child Protection Information Sharing is at the heart of protecting children. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent the sharing of information for the purpose of keeping children safe. Information can be shared without consent, if requesting consent would place the child at risk (eg suspected fabricated or induced illness). Discuss with a senior clinician. Multi-agency safeguarding hubs may enable effective sharing of information.

See '*Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers*', published by HM Government in 2018 (<https://www.gov.uk>). The seven golden rules to information sharing in this document are summarized as follows:

- 1 The GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, and human rights law provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
- 2 Be open and honest with the individual (and/or family where appropriate) about information sharing, unless this is unsafe or inappropriate.
- 3 Get advice from other practitioners (or information governance lead) if unsure, without disclosing the individual's identity where possible.
- 4 Where possible, share information with consent, and where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared, unless there are good reasons (eg there is a risk to safety).
- 5 Base decisions about information sharing on safety and well-being.
- 6 Ensure information shared is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, timely, and secure.
- 7 Record what is shared and what is not shared, and the reasons why.



Index

Note: Tables, figures, and boxes are indicated by an italic *t*, *f*, and *b* following the page number.

A

- A2 pulley injury 448
- abdominal aortic aneurysm,
ruptured 536–7, 537*f*
- abdominal injury,
children 740
- abdominal mass,
children 721
- abdominal pain 520–2
- analgesia 290
- in cancer 522
- in children 720–1
- in pregnancy 604–5
- abdominal trauma
356–8, 361*f*
- abortion 598–9
- abruptio placenta 602, 612
- abscess 546–7
- anorectal 535
- Bartholin's 581
- breast 547, 616
- peritonillar 570
- pillonidal 534
- retropharyngeal 571
- Acanthamoeba* keratitis 555
- ACE inhibitor poisoning 207
- acetabular fractures
482, 483*f*
- acetaminophen see
paracetamol
- acetylcysteine 198
- Achilles tendon
injuries 496–7
- acidosis
lactic 103
metabolic 102
- acoustic neuroma 573
- acromio-clavicular joint
injury 471
children 747
- activated charcoal 192
- activated partial thrombo-
plastin time 175
- acute confusional
state 140–1
- Addisonian crisis 163
- adenosine 92
- adhesive capsulitis 475
- adrenaline (epinephrine)
anaphylaxis 45
- bradycardia 86–7
- cardiac arrest 55
- children 666, 667*f*,
668, 670

- local anaesthesia 295
- newborn 661
- advanced life support
adult 54*f*, 55
newborn 658–61, 659*f*
paediatric 668–71,
669*f*, 671*f*
- Advanced Trauma Life
Support (ATLS®) 331
- aggression 624, 626
- AIDS and HIV 250–3
- airway management 50
- burns 398, 400, 403
- cardiac arrest 52
- children 662, 670
- foreign body 664, 665*f*
- nasopharyngeal airway 335
- newborn 658
- oropharyngeal airway 335
- spinal injury 388–9
- surgical 336, 337*f*
- airway obstruction 47,
116, 334–5
children 693*t*
- alcohol (ethanol)
absorption, metabolism,
and elimination 638
- abuse 638
- intoxication 210, 639
- poisoning 211
- and police 34
- withdrawal 640, 641
- alcoholics, help for 641
- alcohol-related brain
injury 641
- alteplase 81
- Amanita phalloides* 219
- amaurosis fugax 556
- ambulance crew 14
- Ambulance Incident
Officer 41
- Ametop® 298
- aminophylline 110
in children 695
- amiodarone 90
- amnesia, transient global 141
- amniotic fluid embolism 612
- amphetamine 223, 642
- amputation 443
toes 506
- amyl nitrite 223
- anaesthesia
general 320–1, 326–7
topical 298
- see also local anaesthesia
- anal fissure 534
- analgesia 283, 284–91
children 285, 286, 290,
291, 648, 735
- trauma 330
- anaphylaxis 44–5, 46*f*
in children 666, 667*f*
- angina 71
- Prinzmetal's (variant) 73
- unstable 72
- angio-oedema 44–5
- angioplasty for MI 80
- anion gap 102–3
- ankle
fractures 500, 501*f*
injuries 498
in children 755
- nerve blocks 314–15, 315*f*
Ottawa rules 498, 499*f*
- sprains 502
- X-rays 501*f*
- ankylosing spondylitis 513
- anorectal problems 534–5
- anterior cord syndrome 391
- anthrax 243, 643
- antibiotics
abscess 546
- bites 420
- in compound fractures 428
- and oral contraception 585
- pneumonia 115, 703
- prophylaxis 420
- trauma 330
- anticoagulants 178–9
- anti-D immunoglobulin
596, 613
- antidotes 194–5
- antipsychotic drugs 635
- aortic aneurysm,
abdominal, ruptured
536–7, 537*f*
- aortic dissection 96–7
- Stanford classification 96*f*
- aortic injury 354
- apophysitis, traction 730
- appendicitis 523
children 721
epiploic 533
pregnancy 605
- arc (welder's) eye 554
- ARDS, in COVID-19 260
- arterial blood gases 102–3
- arthritis 510–13
in children 727
- septic 511, 727

ascites 131
aspiration, pulmonary 116–17, 349
aspirin (salicylate) 284
poisoning 197
asthma
acute 108–11
cardiac arrest 111
children 694–5, 696f, 697f
asystole 53
atracurium 327
atrial fibrillation 93
atrial flutter 92
atrioventricular block 84
atrophic vaginitis 582
atropine 86–7, 670
as antidote 194t
poisoning 206
attenders
inappropriate 18
regular 19
Australian Mental Health Triage Scale 628
AutoPulse 53
avian flu 37, 262
aviator's astragalus 514

B

back pain 508–9
bacterial tracheitis, children 693
bad news, breaking 26–7
balanitis 724
Bankart lesion 514
barbiturate poisoning 205
barotrauma 270–1, 567
Bartholin's abscess 581
Barton's fracture 458, 514
basic life support 50–1
newborn 658–61, 659f
paediatric 662, 663f
batteries, button 220
Bazett's formula (QTc) 69
bee stings 422
Bell's palsy 564
benign intracranial hypertension 139
benign (paroxysmal) positional vertigo 573
Bennett's fracture–dislocation 447, 514
benzodiazepines
abuse 642
poisoning 204
bereavement 27
berry poisoning 219
best grimace response 737t
beta-blocker poisoning 206
biceps injury 466
Bier's block 300–1
biliary tract problems 526

bilious vomiting 677
birth, emergency delivery 608–9
bites 420–3
dogs 421
human 422
infection 420, 421
insects 422
reverse fight bites 422, 443
snake 423
and stings 422–3
tetanus 424
ticks 241, 422
bladder injury 360
blast injuries 397
Blatchford score 126–7, 127t
bleeding disorders 174–7
blepharitis 559
blindness, sudden 556–7
blood pressure, normal, children 649t
blood transfusion 180–3
reactions 183
blow-out fracture 382
BMA Counselling Service for Doctors 17
body lice 240
body packers 225
Boerhaave's syndrome 343
Bohler's angle 504f
bombs (blast injuries) 397
bone anatomy 427
Bordetella pertussis, whooping cough 700
botulism 149, 247
boutonnière deformity 441f, 514
bowel problems 527–33
boxer's fracture 514
brachial plexus blocks 308
brachialis injury 466
bradycardia 84–7
bradycardia 84–7
algorithm 87f
children 673
brain injury, alcohol-related 641
breast
abscess 547, 616
swelling, babies 676
breast-feeding and drugs 594
breathlessness (dyspnoea) 100
bronchiolitis 698–9
bronchus, ruptured 346
Brown–Séquard syndrome 391
Brugada syndrome 69, 147
bruises 411

child abuse 758
bumper fracture 514
bupivacaine 293
burns 398–405
airway, from cocaine 571
child abuse 405, 760
children 740
inhalation injury 402–3
BURP manoeuvre 324
bursitis 433
infrapatellar 493
prepatellar 493
button batteries 220

C

Caesarean section 615
CAGE questionnaire 638
calcaneal fracture 504–5
calcific tendonitis 475
calcium antagonist poisoning 206
calf
injuries 496–7
squeeze test 497
Canadian C-spine rule 477
cancer and abdominal pain 522
cannabinoid novel psychoactive substances 221
capacity, defining 645
carbamate insecticides 214
carbon monoxide poisoning 216, 402, 403
carboxyhaemoglobin 216, 402, 403
cardiac arrest 48–57
algorithms 49f, 54f
asthma 111
children 662, 663f, 668–71
drugs 52, 661, 670
hyperkalaemic 170
newborn 661
pregnancy 614–15
reversible causes 53t
thoracotomy 353
trauma 352
cardiac arrhythmias 84–93
in children 672
in poisoning 191
cardiac ischaemia 71
cardiac markers 75
cardiac pacing 55, 86–7
cardiac tamponade 351
cardiogenic pulmonary oedema 104–5
cardiogenic shock 64, 81
cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
adult 48–55

- children 662, 663f, 668–71, 669f, 671f
decisions 25
mechanical 53
newborn 660–1
cardioversion,
 synchronized 90
carotid artery
 dissection 377
carpal fractures 453
carpal tunnel syndrome 456
carpus, fractures 453
casts 430–1
catheterization, male 542
cauda equina
 syndrome 509
CBRN incidents (chemical/
 biological/radiological/
 nuclear) 41, 218
cellulitis 419, 467, 545
 ear canal 566
 orbital 558
cement burns 405
central cord syndrome 391
central retinal artery
 occlusion 556
central retinal vein
 occlusion 556
central venous access 58–9
cephalohaematoma 676
cerebral haemorrhage 150
cerebral infarction 150
cerebral venous
 thrombosis 139
cervical artery
 dissection 377
cervical cancer 591
cervical cord syndrome,
 central 391
cervical disc herniation 477
cervical ectropion
 (erosion) 591
cervical polyp 591
cervical spine control
 330, 734
 $\text{CHADS}_2\text{VA}_2\text{SC}$ score 93
chalazion 559
chance fracture 514
charcoal, activated 192
CHEMDATA 38
chemical burns 405
 of eyes 555
chemical incidents 38, 218
 decontamination 218
 roadside 38
chest compression 51
 children 662
 newborn 660
chest drain insertion 119,
 346, 347f
chest injury 338–51
 analgesia 289
children 740
 penetrating 350–1
chest pain 70
 atypical 74
 differential diagnosis 70t
 pericarditis 82–3
 sickle cell disease 184
chest wall injury score 340t
chickenpox 235
child abuse 756–63
 fractures 759
Child Protection Plan 763
Children Act (1989 and
 2004) 762
chlorine poisoning 217
choking 47, 664
cholangitis, ascending 526
cholecystitis 526
cholesteatoma 567
Christmas disease 176
chronic kidney
 disease 166–7
chronic obstructive pul-
 monary disease 112–13
ciguatera fish poisoning 239
clavicle fracture 471
 children 747
clay-shoveller's fracture 515
clinical decision units 3
clomethiazole
 poisoning 204
Clothier report 636
clozapine 635
CN gas 217
coagulation cascade 177f
coagulation disorders 174
cocaine 223, 642
 pharyngeal burns 571
coccyx fractures 483
cochlear implants 565
co-codamol 284
codeine 288
co-dydramol 284
cognitive assessment 623
cold injury 267
colitis
 ischaemic 531
 ulcerative 533
collapse 146–7
collateral ligament injuries
 elbow 465
knee 488, 492
 thumb 446, 448
Colles' fracture 454–6,
 455f, 515
colovaginal fistulae 582
coma 142, 143, 144
 alcohol overdose 639
 Glasgow Coma Scale
 368, 369
 children 737t
 hypoglycaemia 158–9
compartment syndrome 406
compound fractures 428–9
compulsory
 hospitalization 644
concrete thinking 619
concussion 376
confidentiality 34
confusional state 140–1
conjunctival FB 554
conjunctivitis 559
 neonatal 676
consent 32
contact lens problems 555
continuous ambulatory
 peritoneal dialysis 167
contraceptive
 problems 584–5
conversion (dissociative)
 disorders 637
convulsions 156–7
 children 704
 poisoning 191
COPD 112–13
coping as a junior
 doctor 16–17
cord prolapse 610
corneal trauma 554–5
coronary syndromes,
 acute 72–3
Coroner 12, 28, 35
Coronavirus, 258, 259–61
corpus luteum cyst
 588, 601
cortical blindness 738
cot death 674–5
counselling service 17
court, going to 35
COVID-19 260
crab lice 240
cranial arteritis 137
cricoid pressure 322–4
cricothyroidotomy
 336, 337f
Crohn's disease 533
croup 692
cruciate ligaments 488, 492
crush syndrome 406–7
crushed fingers 443
crying babies 677
CS gas 217
CT scan
 abdominal pain 520–1
 aortic dissection 97
coma 144
 head injury 370, 371f
 headache 133, 134,
 135f, 137
intracerebral
 haemorrhage 154f
pulmonary embolus 125
ruptured abdominal aortic
 aneurysm 536–7

stroke 151, 153f
trauma 332, 356, 361f
ureteric colic 541
CURB-65 score 115t
Cushing response 362
cut down, venous 655
cyanide poisoning 215, 403
cystic fibrosis 701
cystitis 168, 169

D

dacrocystitis 559
dantrolene 191, 222, 275
dashboard dislocation 515
de Quervain's tenosynovitis 459
death 27–9
decompression illness 272–3
decontamination chemical 218
radiation incidents 218, 279
deep venous thrombosis 122–3
in pregnancy 607
defibrillation 52
children 668
defibrillator, implantable 95
dehydration 238, 718–19
deliberate self-harm 628–9
delirium 140–1, 619
delirium tremens 640
delivery, emergency 608–9
delusion 619
dementia 141
dengue 256
dental anaesthesia 309
dental anatomy 575
dental emergencies 576–7
see also teeth
dento-alveolar fractures 380
depressant (sedative) novel psychoactive substances 221
depression 632
dermatitis herpetiformis 688
dermatomes 394–5
detention, compulsory 644
diabetes mellitus 160–1
hypoglycaemia 158–9
pregnancy 606
diabetic ketoacidosis 160–1
children 708–9
diagnostic peritoneal lavage 332
dialysis problems 166–7
diamorphine 288
nasal 291

diaphragm, ruptured 343
diarrhoea 236
diazepam overdose 204
sedation 318
status epilepticus 157
children 705
diclofenac 285
difficult patients 20
digital nerve block 304–5, 305f
digital nerve injury 440t, 442
dignity 5
digoxin poisoning 207
dihydrocodeine 288
diphtheria 692
discharge from ED 4, 10–11
against advice 33
elderly patient 23
disclosure in public interest 34
dislocations 429
ankle 500
children 742
elbow 461, 464
finger 445
hip 482, 483f
knee 490
patella 490
children 753
shoulder 468–70,
469f, 470f
thumb 446
toes 506
wrist 452, 460
disseminated intravascular coagulation 177, 606
diverticular disease 532
diving emergencies 270–3
documentation 6–7, 32
dog bites 421
dressings 418
burns 404
Dressler's syndrome 83
driving 34, 551
vertigo 572
drowning 268–9
children 740
drug abuse complications 643
novel psychoactive substances 221
recreational drugs 222–3
withdrawal 643
drugs anaesthetic 326–7
doses in children 649, 661
interactions with OCP 585
newborn doses 661, 671
psychiatric, complications of 635

sedation 318
see also poisoning
dry socket pain 577
Dupuytren's fracture–dislocation 515
Duverney fracture 515
dyspnoea 100
dystonic reaction 635

E

ear examination 565, 690
nerve blocks 310, 311f
problems 562, 565–7
wounds 478
earache 566–7
referred pain 567
Ebola fever 258
ECG 68–9
bradycardias 85f
hyperkalaemia 170
hypokalaemia 172
hypothermia 265
myocardial infarction 76–8
pericarditis 82, 83f
tachyarrhythmias 91f, 92f
tricyclic antidepressant poisoning 202, 203f
eclampsia 611
ecstasy 222, 642
liquid 223
ectopic pregnancy 600–1
eczema 678
elbow fat pad sign 462f
injuries 462–3
children 750
nerve blocks 308
problems, soft tissue 466–7
pulled 750
elderly patient assessment 22
discharge 23
falls 145
trauma 387
electrical injuries 276–7
electronic records 7
emesis, induced 192
EMLA® cream 298
emotional abuse 761
encephalitis, acute 234
endocarditis, infective 244
end of life care 25
endometrial carcinoma 582
endometriosis 588
enflurane 327
enteric fever 256
enteropathic arthropathies 513

Entonox® 287
environmental
 emergencies 263–79
epicondylitis 466
epididymitis 544
epididymo-orchitis 723
epiglottitis 693
epilepsy 156–7, 704
epinephrine see adrenaline
epiphyseal injury
 children 742, 743f
 Salter–Harris classification
 742, 743f
epiphysis, slipped upper
 femoral 729
epiploic appendagitis 533
episcleritis 559
episiotomy 610
epistaxis 568
Epley manoeuvre 573f
ergotamine 136
erysipelas 545
erythema
 chronicum migrans 689
 marginatum 689
 multiforme 688
 nodosum 688
 toxicum, infants 678
Essex–Lopresti
 fracture–dislocation 515
ethanol see alcohol
ethyl chloride 298
ethylene glycol
 poisoning 212
etomidate 326
extensor tendon injury
 440t, 442
external jugular vein 59
external rotation method,
 shoulder dislocation 468
eye 549–60
 burns 555
 examination 550–1
 foreign bodies 553, 554
 injury 552–3
 problems and HIV 252
eye signs in head injury 368
eyebrow wounds 478
eyelid wounds 478, 553
eyelids, superglued 555

F

fabricated illness 636, 760
facial burns 402–3, 404
facial fractures 378–85
facial injury 378–9, 478–9
 haemorrhage after 383
facial nerve palsy 564
 causes 564t
facial wounds 478–9
facilities of ED 2

factitious disorder 636, 637
 in health care
 workers 636
fainting 146–7
fascia iliaca compartment
 block 312
FAST scan (focused assessment with sonography for trauma) 332, 355
fatal accident inquiry 35
febrile child 679–80
 traffic light assessment system 679f
febrile convulsions 706
feeding difficulties,
 babies 677
female genital
 mutilation 587
femoral neck, fracture 484
femoral nerve block 313
femoral shaft fracture
 486–7, 487f
 children 752
femoral vein
 children 655
 venous access 58, 59
fentanyl 288, 291
fetal injury 612
fibula, fractures 494
field block 299
fight bites, reverse 422, 443
finger pad amputations 443
fingers
 crushed 443
 deformities 440t, 441f
 digital nerve block
 304–5, 305f
 dislocations 445
 fractures 444, 445, 751
fish bones in pharynx 563
fish poisoning 239
fish spine stings 422
fishhooks, removal of 413
fits see convulsions;
 seizures
flail segment 342
flash burns 397
fleas 240
flexor tendon injury 440t,
 441f, 442
flight of ideas 619
fluid requirements in
 children 719t
flumazenil 204, 318
focal fit 704
follow-up arrangements 7
food poisoning 236–9
foot
 dislocations 504, 505
 fractures 504–5
 injuries in children 755
 soft tissue problems 507
forearm injuries 460–1, 751
forehead, nerve blocks
 310, 311f
foreign bodies
 ear 562
 eye 553, 554
 under fingernail 443
foot 507
ingested 220, 563
inhaled 116, 563,
 664, 693t
nose 220, 562
rectal 535
vaginal 583
wounds 413
foreskin problems
 543, 724
fractures
 and child abuse 759
 clinic 436–7
 eponymous 514–18
 open 428–9
osteoporosis 431
paediatric 742
system for describing 426–7
see also under
 individual bones
fragmentation injuries 397
frailty 22
frontal sinus, fractures 383
frostbite 267
fundoscopy 551
funny turns (children) 707
furunculosis of ear 566

G

Galeazzi fracture–dislocation 460, 515
gallstones 526
 in pregnancy 605
gamekeeper's thumb 446,
 448, 515
gammahydroxybutyrate (GHB, GBH) 223
Garden classification 484t
gas gangrene 247
gastric lavage 192
gastroenteritis 236–8
 in children 718–19
gastrointestinal bleeding
 lower 128–9
 upper 126–7
gastrostomy tubes
 misplaced 548
 problems 129
General Medical Council 34
generalized
 weakness 148–9
genital injury 586–7, 761
genital ulcers/sores 248
German measles 231

gestational trophoblastic disease 602
GHB 223
giant cell arteritis 137, 557
glandular fever (infectious mononucleosis) 231
Glasgow–Blatchford score 126–7, 127t
Glasgow Coma Scale 368, 369
children 737t
glaucoma 558
glomerulonephritis 713
glue (for wounds) 415
glue sniffing 642
golfer's elbow 466
gonococcal arthritis 513
gonorrhoea 248
gout, acute 512
gout bursitis 467
government targets 4
GPs, liaising with 7, 12
grand mal 704
Graves' disease 164
gravidity 592
grease gun injuries 443
groin lumps 722
GTN intravenous infusion 72
Guillain–Barré syndrome 148
gunshot injuries 34, 396
gynaecological problems 580–91

H

haemarthrosis, knee 492
haematemesis 126
haematoma
block 299
extradural 371f, 373
intracranial 373
risks, after head injury 370
soft tissue 432
subdural 371f, 373
subungual 443
haematuria,
children 712–13
haemodialysis
problems 166–7
haemolytic uraemic syndrome 715
haemophilia 174, 176
Haemophilus influenzae 652t
haemoptysis 98
causes 98t
haemorrhage
antenpartum 603
and anticoagulants 179
cerebral 150

facial trauma 383
lower GI 128–9
massive 182
post-partum 603
post-surgical 548
subarachnoid 134–5
tooth extraction 577
upper GI 126–7
vitreous 557
haemorrhoids 534
haemostasis 175f
haemothorax 345
hallucinations 619
hallucinogenic novel psychoactive substances 221
haloperidol 627
halothane 327
hamate fracture 453
hand
anatomy 438, 439f
arthritis 512
crushed fingers 443
infections 419, 449
injuries 438–40, 440t
wounds 419, 442–3
hand hygiene 36
handover of patients 11
hangman's fracture 516
Hawkin's impingement test 474
Hazchem board 38
head injury 362–76
analgesia 289
and child abuse 760
children 736–8
examination 368–9
Glasgow Coma Scale 368, 369
history 366–7
imaging 370, 371f
management 372
minor 374–5
monitoring 364, 365f
risks of haematoma 370
triage 364
warning instructions 375b
head lice 240
headache 132–9
analgesic 138
cluster 138
CSF spinal leak 138
sudden severe 134–5
tension 139
hearing 565
heart block 84
heart rates in children, normal 649t
HEART score, myocardial ischaemia 71t
heat illness 274–5
heat stroke 275
helicopters 38
Henoch–Schönlein purpura 681
children 723
hepatitis 249, 421
hernia 528, 720, 722, 723
heroin 196, 225, 243, 288, 643
herpes simplex 234, 581
herpes zoster 235
Hib vaccine 652t
high-pressure injection injuries 443
Hill–Sachs lesion 516
hip
dislocations 482, 483f
fractures 482, 483f, 484–5, 485f
in children 752
pain 485
in children 728–9
histamine fish poisoning 239
HIV 250–3
horse rider's knee 516
hospitalization, compulsory 644
Hume fracture–dislocation 461, 516
humerus fractures 465, 472f, 477
children 747, 748, 749f
Hunt and Hess scale, subarachnoid haemorrhage 135t
Hutchinson fracture 516
hydatid of Morgagni, torsion of 723
hydrocarbons 116, 213
hydrocele 722
hydrofluoric acid burns 405
hyperbaric chambers 271t
oxygen 216, 271t, 403
hyperremesis
gravidarum 595
hyperglycaemia 167
hyperglycaemic crises 160–1
hyperkalaemia 170–1
in acute kidney disease (children) 714
in chronic kidney disease 166
pre-dialysis 167
hypernatraemia 162
hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state 160–1
hyperpyrexia, malignant 275
hypertension 94

in acute kidney disease (children) 714
in chronic kidney disease 166
idiopathic intracranial/benign intracranial 139
malignant 138
in pregnancy 94, 606
hyperthermia 191, 274–5
hypertrophic cardiomyopathy 146
ECG 147
hyperventilation 101
hypoglycaemia 158–9
alcohol-induced 639
coma 142, 144
newborn 661
sulfonylurea poisoning 205
hypokalaemia 172
hypomania 633
hyponatraemia 162
hypotension
poisoning 191
shock 64–5
hypothermia 264–6
bleeding disorders 174
blood transfusion 182
classification 264t
and drowning 268
ECG 265
in poisoning 191
rewarming methods 266
hypovolaemic shock 64
burns 398
GI bleed 126, 128
pregnancy 601, 612, 614
transfusion 180

I
ibuprofen 285
ice skater's fracture 516
ideas of reference 619
idiopathic intracranial hypertension 139
idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura 681
iliac fossa mass 523
immersion foot 267
immobilization, spinal 388–9, 389f
immune thrombocytopenia 681
immunization 652–3
immunoglobulin, anti-D 596, 613
impetigo 245, 678
impingement syndromes in shoulder 474
impingement test 474

inappropriate attenders 18
incubation periods of infectious diseases 228–9
induced illness 636, 760
infantile spasm 704
infection
bites 420, 421
cellulitis 545
control and prevention 36–7
dental 577
pelvic 582, 589
post-surgical 548
staphylococcal 245
streptococcal 244, 545
wounds 245, 419, 421
see also abscess
infectious diseases 37, 227–62
childhood 230–1
COVID-19 260
duration of infectivity 229
imported 254
incubation periods 228–9
notifiable 229
tropical diseases 254
infectious mononucleosis 231
infective endocarditis 244
infestations 240–1
influenza pandemic 37, 262
infra-orbital nerve block 309
infrapatellar bursitis 493
inguinal swellings, children 722–3
inhalation injury 402–3
children 740
inhalational anaesthetics 327
injury prevention 733
Injury Severity Score (ISS) 333
inquest 35
INR 175, 178
insect bites 422
insecticide poisoning 214
insulin overdose 159
insulin therapy in poisoning 195
intercostal (chest) drain insertion 119, 347f
intercostal nerve block 303
internal jugular vein 59, 60f
intertrochanteric fractures 485f
interview, psychiatric 620–1
intestinal obstruction 528–9
in pregnancy 605
intracerebral haemorrhage 154
intracranial haematoma 373
intracranial pressure 362, 363f
intra-hospital transfers 31
Intralipid® in poisoning 195, 294
LA toxicity 294
intra-ocular pressure 551
intra-osseous infusion 656–7, 657f
intrauterine contraceptive device 585
intrauterine system 588
intravenous fluids
children 656–7
trauma 330
intubation 322–5
difficult 324–5
failed intubation drill 325f
intussusception 721
ipratropium bromide, in asthma 695, 696f, 697f
iritis, acute 558
iron poisoning 209
irradiated patient 279
irritable bowel syndrome 533
irritable hip, children 728
ischaemic colitis 531
ischaemic limb 538
isoflurane 327
isolated greater tuberosity fracture 472
ISS (Injury Severity Score) 333
IUD 585

J
jaundice 130
causes 130t
hepatitis 249
neonatal 676
obstructive 526
jaw thrust manoeuvre 335
Jefferson fracture 516
jellyfish stings 422
Johansson–Larsen's disease 730
joint aspiration 510
Jones fracture 505, 516
jugular vein 58, 59, 60f
children 655
junior doctor, coping as 16–17

K
Kawasaki disease 688
Kemler plate 38
Kernig's sign 133
ketamine 287, 326
children 319, 741

ketoacidosis
alcoholic 640
children 708–9
diabetic 160–1
ketorolac 285
kidney disease,
chronic 166–7
kidney injury, acute
165, 714–15
knee
children 753
injuries 488–92
problems 493
Kocher's method, shoulder
dislocation 468
Kohler's disease 730
Korsakoff's psychosis 641

L

labour 608
labyrinthitis, acute 573
lactic acidosis 103
Langer's lines 479f
laryngospasm 325
laryngotra
cheobronchitis 692
Lassa fever 258
Le Fort fractures 380, 516
learning difficulties 24
left ventricular assist
devices (LVADs) 95
legal aspects 32–5
Legg–Calvé–Perthes'
disease 728
leptospirosis 249
leukaemia, acute 681
levonorgestrel 585
lice 240
lidocaine 293
cream 298
life support, advanced
54f, 55
newborn 658–61, 659f
paediatric 668–71,
669f, 671f
trauma (ATLS®) 331
life support, basic 50–1
newborn 658–61, 659f
paediatric 662, 663f
lightning 276
lignocaine see lidocaine
limb injuries
acute ischaemia 538
paediatric 744
salvage 429
limping child 726–7
line sepsis 63
lip wounds 478
lipid emulsion in poisoning
195, 294
LA toxicity 294

Lisfranc
fracture–dislocation 516
lithium 633
complications of 635
poisoning 205, 635
liver failure 131
liver transplantation, para
acetamol poisoning 199
local anaesthesia
283, 292–3
adrenaline
(epinephrine) in 295
children 297
consent 296
contraindications 292
indications 292
infiltration 299
toxicity 294
see also nerve blocks
locked finger 449
locked knee 493
long bone anatomy 427
lorazepam 627
status epilepticus 157
low back pain 508–9
lower GI tract
bleeding 128–9
LSD 223
LUCAS CPR device 53
lumbar puncture, children
686, 687f
lunate dislocation 452
Lund and Browder charts
(for burns) 399f
luxatio erecta 470, 517
Lyme disease 241

M

magnesium
arrhythmias 55, 91
children 670, 672
asthma 110
children 695
deficiency 172
eclampsia 157, 611
Maisonneuve injury
494, 517
major incidents 40–1
chemical 38, 218
radiation 278–9
malar fractures 382
malaria 255
Malgaigne's fracture 517
malignant hyperpyrexia 275
malingering 636, 637
mallet finger 441f, 444,
448, 517
mammalian diving
reflex 268
mandibular injuries 384–5
mania 633

mannitol 135, 372, 558
MAOIs 635
Marburg fever 258
march fracture 517
mastitis 616
mastoiditis 567
maxillofacial injuries 378–9
measles 230
meconium aspiration 660
median nerve block
306, 307f
median nerve injury
440t, 452
medical defence
organization 33
Medical Incident Officer 41
medically unexplained
symptoms 19, 637
medicolegal aspects 32–5
melaena 128
Ménière's disease 573
meningitis 232–3,
682–3, 685f
bacterial 232
fungal 233
tuberculous 233
viral 233
meningococcal infection
232, 681, 682–3, 685f
menorrhagia 590
menstrual cycle and
pain 588
Mental Capacity Act 33,
631, 645
mental health
assessment 631
legislation 631, 644–5
triage 628
mental nerve block 309
mental state
examination 622–3
mephedrone 221, 642
MERS 258
mesenteric ischaemia/
infarction 530–1
metabolic acidosis 102
metabolic diseases 677
metacarpal fractures 445
children 751
metacarpophalangeal
joint 446
metatarsal fractures 505
methoxyflurane 288, 327
meticillin resistant *Staph.*
aureus 245
midazolam
sedation 318, 319
status epilepticus 157,
671, 704, 705
Middle East respiratory syn
drome (MERS) 258
migraine 136

- Milch method, shoulder dislocation 469
- milestones, paediatric 653t
- milia 678
- Mini-Mental State Examination 623
- miscarriage (abortion) 592, 598–9
- mittelschmerz 588
- Mobile Medical Team 41
- monilial infection 678
- monoamine oxidase inhibitors 635
- Monteggia fracture-dislocation 461, 517
- mood, affect 632
- 'morning-after pill' 585
- morphine 286
- children 290
 - overdose 196
 - smooth muscle spasm 286
 - trauma 289
- Morton's metatarsalgia 507
- motor neurone lesions, upper vs lower 148t
- mouth-to-mouth ventilation 50, 662
- MRSA 245
- MSU 168
- multiple sclerosis 148
- vertigo 573
- mumps 230
- orchitis 230, 723
- Munchausen's syndrome 636
- by proxy 760
- muscle injuries 432
- muscle relaxants 327
- mushroom poisoning 219
- myasthenia gravis 149
- myocardial infarction 72–81
- ECG changes 76–8
 - localization 78
 - NSTEMI 72–3
 - STEMI 74–5, 80–1
- myocardial ischaemia, HEART score 71t
- myoclonic fit 704
- myositis ossificans 433
- ## N
- nail bed lacerations 443
- naloxone 196, 318
- nappy rash 678
- naproxen 285
- narrow complex tachycardia 92
- nasal bleeding 568
- nasal diamorphine 291
- nasal foreign bodies 562
- nasal fracture 569
- naso-ethmoidal fracture 381
- nasopharyngeal airway 335
- National Early Warning Score (NEWS2) 61
- National Triage Scale 9t
- near drowning 268–9
- neck
- cervical spine injury 388–93, 477
 - pain 477
 - penetrating injury 386
 - soft tissue injury 476–7
 - wounds 386
- necrotizing fasciitis 244
- needle cricothyroidotomy 336, 337f
- needlestick injury 425
- Neer's impingement test 474
- neglect 761
- neighbour (buddy)
- strapping 445f
- nephroblastoma 721
- nephrotic syndrome 715
- nerve blocks 302
- ankle 314–15, 315f
 - digital 304–5, 305f
 - ear 310, 311f
 - elbow 308
 - fascia iliaca compartment 312
 - femoral 313
 - forehead 310, 311f
 - infra-orbital 309
 - intercostal 303
 - median 306, 307f
 - mental 309
 - peroneal 314
 - radial 308
 - supraorbital 310, 311f
 - supratrochlear 310, 311f
 - sural 314, 315f
 - tibial 314, 315f
 - ulnar 306, 307f
- nerve injuries, hand 440t, 442
- neuroblastoma 721
- neuroleptic malignant syndrome 275
- neurological examination
- coma 144
 - head injury 368–9
 - spinal injury 390
- neutropenic sepsis 63
- newborn resuscitation 658
- NEWS2 61
- NHS 24: 13
- NHS 111: 13
- NHS Direct 13
- nimodipine 135
- nitrazepam poisoning 204
- nitrous oxide 287, 327
- non-accidental injury 756–60
- non-cardiogenic pulmonary oedema 106
- non-shockable rhythms 53
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs 285
- normal values
- physiological, children 649t
 - pregnancy 594t
- note keeping 6–7, 32
- notifiable infectious diseases 229
- novel psychoactive substances 221
- NSAIDs 285
- nursemaid's elbow 517
- nutcracker fracture 517
- nystagmus 565
- ## O
- O'Donahue's triad 517
- obsession 619
- obstetrics and gynaecology 579–616
- obstructive jaundice 526
- OCP, drug interactions 585
- oesophageal intubation 324
- oesophageal obstruction (food bolus) 563
- oesophageal rupture 343
- olecranon bursitis 467
- olecranon fracture 463
- ophthalmology 549–60
- opioids 286, 288
- overdose 642
 - poisoning 196
 - sedation 318
- optic neuritis 148, 557
- oral contraceptive pill, drug interactions 585
- oral rehydration therapy 238, 719
- oral wounds 478
- orbital blow-out fractures 382
- orchitis 544, 723
- mumps 230, 723
- organ donation 29
- organophosphate poisoning 214
- oropharyngeal airway 335
- children 670
- Osgood–Schlatter's disease 730
- osmolal gap 103
- ossification centres 745t
- osteoarthritis 511

osteochondritis 730–1
classification 731t
osteochondritis dissecans 467, 493, 507, 731
osteomyelitis 727
finger infection 449
sickle-cell disease 184
tuberculosis 242
osteoporosis 431
otitis externa 566
otitis media 566
Ottawa ankle rules 498, 499f
Ottawa knee rules 489
Ottawa rule to exclude subarachnoid haemorrhage 134
ovarian problems 589
overcrowding 5
oxygen therapy 99
hyperbaric oxygen 216, 271t, 403

P

P wave 68
pacemakers 95
pacing (in ALS) 55
paediatric emergencies 646–763
paediatric fractures 742
paediatric milestones 653t
paediatric resuscitation chart 671f
pain 282
pain assessment 282
pain relief 283
palivizumab, RSV disease 699
pancreatitis 524–5
in pregnancy 605
pandemic 260
paracetamol 284
poisoning 198–201
paraffin poisoning 213
paralysis, periodic 149
paralytic shellfish poisoning 239
paranasal sinusitis 571
paraphimosis 543, 724
paraquat poisoning 213
paratyphoid 256
parity 592
paronychia 449
parotid gland injury 478
parotitis 574
passivity 619
patella fracture 489, 753
patellar tendon
rupture 492
pathological fractures 426
patient flow 4

patients
access to records 33
assessment of elderly patient 22
difficult 20
discharge from ED 4, 10–11
discharge of elderly patient 23
dislike of specific 20
end-of-life care 25
falls in the elderly 145
inappropriate attenders 18
with a label 19
with learning difficulties 24
in police custody 20
regular attenders 19
safety 5
sick, recognition of 61
'special' patient groups 21
transfer of patient 30–1
PEA 53, 111
peak expiratory flow rates 108–9, 109f
children 694f
Pelligrini–Stieda's disease 518
pelvic fractures 480–1, 481f
classification 480t
pelvic infection 616
pelvic inflammatory disease 589
pelvic injury, children 740
penile problems 543, 724
Pentrox® 288
peptic ulcer disease 527
pregnancy 605
pericardial effusion 82, 83
pericardiocentesis 83
pericarditis 82–3
perilunate dislocation 453
perineal tear, imminent 610
periodic paralysis 149
peritoneal dialysis 167
peritoneal lavage 332
peritonitis 520, 523, 532
peritonillar abscess 570
peroneal nerve block 314
peroneal nerve injury 502
peroneal tendon
subluxation 502
perseveration 619
personal protective equipment 36
Perthes' disease 728
pertussis, whooping cough 700
pethidine 288
petit mal 704
petrol poisoning 213

phalangeal fractures 444–5
pharyngeal burns (cocaine) 571
phenol burns 405
phenothiazine poisoning 204
phimosis 724
physiological values in children 649t
physiotherapy 434–5
Pilon fractures 518
pilonidal abscess 534
Pipkin fracture 518
placenta praevia 603
placental abruption 602, 612
plant poisoning 219
plantar fasciitis 507
plaster of Paris 430, 431
platelet disorders 176
pleural effusion 107
causes 107t
Pneumocystis infection 114–15, 252
pneumonia 114–15
children 702–3
differential diagnosis 115
pneumothorax spontaneous 118–20
tension 338–9, 339f
traumatic 344
poisoning 187–225
chemical incidents 40–1, 218
in children 188, 189, 716–17
deliberate 188, 756
diagnosis 190
fish 239
food 236–9
general principles 188–9
reducing absorption 192–3
supportive care 191
poisons information 188–9
police custody, patients in 20
police requests for blood alcohol 34
police statements 35
poliomyelitis 257
polyhydramnios 604
polymyositis 148
porphyria 173
post-coital contraception 585
post-concussion symptoms 376
posterior cord syndrome 391
post-partum problems 616
post-resuscitation care 56–7

- Pott's fracture 518
 PR interval 68
 pre-eclampsia 604, 606
 pregnancy 592–616
 abdominal pain 604–5
 bleeding in 596–7, 602–3
 cardiac arrest 614–15
 ectopic 600–1
 electric shock 276
 hypertension 94, 606
 psychiatric problems 616
 thrombosis 607
 trauma 612–13
 pregnancy tests 597
 prepatellar bursitis 493
 pressure of speech 619
 pretibial lacerations 495
 priapism 543
 PRICE 434
 prilocaine 293
 Prinzmetal's angina 73
 privacy 5
 pro formas 7
 Procurator Fiscal 12, 28, 35
 propofol 318, 326
 prostatitis 543
 prostheses, hip 482, 483f
 prosthetic joint
 infection 511
 prosthetic valve failure 105
 protective equipment 36
 prothrombin time (INR)
 175, 178
 proxymetacaine 293
 pruritus ani 534
 pruritus vulvae 581
 pseudogout 512
 psoriatic arthritis 513
 psychiatric
 assessment 620–1
 after deliberate
 self-harm 629–30
 history 621
 psychiatric drugs,
 complications of 635
 psychiatric interview 620–1
 psychiatry 617–45
 psychogenic coma 144
 psychosis 619
 pulmonary aspiration
 116–17, 349
 pulmonary contusion
 342, 349
 pulmonary embolus 124–5
 in pregnancy 607
 pulmonary oedema
 cardiogenic 104–5
 haemodialysis 166
 non-cardiogenic 106
 pulp infections 449
 pulse oximetry 99, 100
 CO poisoning 216
 pulseless electrical activity
 (PEA) 53, 111
 puncture wounds 413
 pupillary abnormalities 560t
 purpuric rash 681
 pyelonephritis 168
 children 710, 711
 pregnancy 605
 pyloric stenosis 720
 pyogenic flexor
 tenosynovitis 449
 pyrexia of unknown
 origin 254
- Q**
- Q waves 69, 76
 QRS amplitude 69
 QRS width 68
 qSOFA 62
 QT interval 69
 quadriceps rupture 492
 queuing 5
 quinsy 570
 rabies 257, 421
 radial fractures 454–6,
 455f, 460–1, 461f
 children 750, 751
 radial head/neck fracture
 463, 750
 radial head subluxation
 (pulled elbow) 750
 radial nerve block 308
 radial nerve injury
 440t, 467
 radial styloid fracture 458
 radial tenosynovitis 459
 radiation incidents 278–9
 decontamination
 218, 279
 radiological requests 8
 radius, fractures 454–6,
 455f, 460–1, 461f
 children 750, 751
- R**
- Ramsay-Hunt
 syndrome 564
 rape 586–7
 rapid sequence induction
 (intubation, RSI) 322–5
 rashes 681, 682, 688
 reactive arthritis 513
 records 6–7, 32
 red cell transfusion 181
 red eye 558–9
 refeeding syndrome 129
 referral 10, 11, 32
 inappropriate 18
 patient with a label 19
 regular attenders 19
 Reiter's syndrome
 248, 513
 rejection, transplant 167
 relatives
 bereaved 27
 in cardiac arrest 48
 in major incidents 41
 transfer of patient 31
 renal failure 166–7, 714–15
 renal trauma 359
 rescue breaths 50
 children 662
 resin casts 430, 431
 respiratory depression
 coma 143
 opioids 196, 286
 respiratory failure, type
 I/II 102
 respiratory rate
 coma 143
 normal, children 649t
 respiratory syncytial virus
 698, 699
 resuscitation
 burns 400–1
 cardiac arrest 48–55
 pregnancy 614
 children 649, 650–1,
 662, 663f, 668–71,
 669f, 671f
 formulae 671b
 discontinuing 53, 671
 mechanical 53
 newborn 658–61
 paediatric trauma 734–5
 post-resuscitation
 care 56–7
 trauma 331
 unconscious patient 142
 resuscitation chart,
 paediatrics 671f
 reteplase 81
 retinal artery occlusion 556
 retinal detachment 557
 retinal vein occlusion 556
 retrobulbar
 haemorrhage 382
 retropharyngeal
 abscess 571
 return visits 32
 reverse fight bites
 422, 443
 Revised Trauma Score 333
 rewarming methods 266
 rhabdomyolysis 222, 223,
 224, 406–7
 rheumatic fever 513
 rheumatoid arthritis 512
 rib fracture 340, 342
 rifampicin 233, 585
 ring avulsions 443
 Rinne's test 565

Road Traffic Act 34
roadside procedures 38
Rockwood Clinical Frailty Scale 22t
rocuronium 327
Rolando fracture 518
Romano–Ward syndrome 69
ROSIER score, stroke 150, 151t
rotator cuff tears 473
rotator cuff tendonitis/tendinopathy 475
Rovsing's sign 523
RSV 698–9
rubella 231
runner's fracture 518

S

sacrum fracture 483
Sad Persons Scale 630
safety, personal 625
salaam attack 704
salbutamol
anaphylaxis 45, 666
asthma 110, 695,
696f, 697f
COPD 113
hyperkalaemia 171, 714
inhalation injury 403
poisoning 208
salicylate poisoning 197
salivary gland problems 574
Salter–Harris classification, epiphyseal injury 742, 743f
saphenous nerve block 314
SARS 37, 259–61
scabies 241
scalded skin syndrome 245, 678
scaphoid fracture 450–1, 451f
children 751
scapula fracture 473
scarlet fever 244
Scheuermann's disease 730
schizophrenia 634
thought blocking 619
SCIWORA 739
scrotal injuries 361
scrotal swellings, children 722–3
seborrhoeic dermatitis 678
sedation
ASA classification of depth of 316t
for procedures 316–17
children 319
drugs 318
of violent patient 627

seizures 156–7, 704
Seldinger technique 58, 119
self-harm 628–9
self-labelled patients 19
sepsis 62–3
in babies 676
line 63
neutropenic 63
septic arthritis 511, 727
sickle-cell disease 184
septic shock 62, 64
septicaemia
meningococcal 682
staphylococcal 245
seronegative spondyloarthropathies 513
serotonin syndrome 224
Sever's disease 730
severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) 37, 259–61
sevoflurane 327
sexual abuse 761
sexual assault 586–7
sexually transmitted infections 248
Sgarbossa criteria, ACS in LBBB 76
sharps, safe handling and disposal 36
shellfish poisoning 239
shifts 17
shin splints 497
shingles 235
shock 64–5
anaphylactic 44–5, 46f
cardiogenic 64, 81
hypovolaemic 64, 180
neurogenic 390
septic 62, 63, 64
shockable rhythm 55, 668
short stay wards 3
shoulder
dislocation 468–70,
469f, 470f
injuries 471–3
children 747
pain diagnosis 475
soft tissue problems 474–5
shoulder dystocia 611
sick sinus syndrome 84
sickle-cell disease 184–5
silver trauma 387
Sinding Larsen's disease 730
sinusitis 571
skin lesions
causes 689t
children 688–9
popping (drugs) 643
problems, infants 678
skin tissue glue 415
skull fracture 363, 369,
370, 372
basal fracture 369, 372
child abuse 760
compound (open) 372
depressed 370
slit lamp examination 551
Smith's fracture 457, 518
snake bites 423
Snellen chart 550
snow blindness 554
sodium bicarbonate
cardiac arrest
children 670
newborn 661
hyperkalaemia 170,
171, 714
tricyclic antidepressant poisoning 202
sodium derangements 162
soft tissue injuries 432
solvent abuse 642
somatization 637
somatoform pain disorder 637
space-occupying lesions 137
sphincter of Oddi, spasm 286
spinal cord injury 388–93
airway management 388–9
children 739
circulation 390
examination 390
imaging 392–3, 393f,
476, 477f
incomplete injury patterns 391
muscle power grading 391t
neurological examination 390
without radiographic abnormality (SCIWORA) 391, 739
spinal immobilization 388–9, 389f
spine control 330, 734
injury 388–93
children 739
X-rays 392, 393f,
476, 477f
splenic sequestration, acute 184
sprains 432
ankle 502
neck 476–7
wrist 459

ST segment 69, 74–8
 staff 2, 3
 care after death of
 patient 28–9
 debriefing after major
 incident 41
 interaction 17
 sudden infant death
 syndrome 675
 staphylococcal infections 245, 678
 staples 415
 status epilepticus 156–7
 children 705
 Steri-Strips™ 415, 495
 sternum fracture 341
 stillbirth 592
 Stimson's tech-
 nique, shoulder
 dislocation 469
 stimulant novel psycho-
 active substances 221
 stings 422–3
 stool culture 237
 straddle fracture 518
 strains 432
 streptococcal infections 244, 545
 streptokinase 81
 stress fractures, MTs 505
 stridor 692–3
 stroke 150–1
 ROSIER score 150, 151t
 thrombectomy 153
 thrombolysis 152
 vertigo 573
 stye 559
 subacromial bursitis 475
 subarachnoid
 haemorrhage 134–5
 subclavian vein, venous
 access 58, 59, 60f
 subconjunctival
 haemorrhage 559
 substance abuse 642–3
 subtarsal examination 551
 subtrochanteric
 fractures 487
 subungual haematoma 443
 sudden infant death
 syndrome 674–5
 suicide, risk of 630
 sulfonylurea poisoning 205
 sumatriptan 136
 superglued eyelids 555
 supracondylar fracture,
 elbow 465, 748, 749f
 supracondylar fracture,
 knee 487
 supraorbital nerve block 310, 311f

supraventricular nerve block 310, 311f
 supraventricular tachycardia (SVT) 91, 92
 children 672
 sural nerve block 314, 315f
 surgery 519–48
 complications after 548
 surgical airway 336, 337f
 sutures 416, 417f
 suxamethonium 327
 swan neck deformity 441f
 swine flu 37, 262
 synchronized cardioversion 90
 syncope 146–7
 funny turns, in
 children 707
 synovitis, transient 728

T

T waves 69, 76
 tachyarrhythmias 88–93
 tachycardia algorithm 88–9
 talar injuries 504
 team leader 48
 tear gas 217
 teeth
 eruption 575t
 extraction,
 haemorrhage 577
 fractures 576f
 toothache 290, 577
see also dental emergencies
 telemedicine 13
 telephone advice 13
 temazepam poisoning 204
 temperature, core, measurement of 264, 274
 temporal arteritis 137, 557
 temporal lobe epilepsy 704
 temporomandibular dysfunction 577
 temporomandibular joint dislocation 385
 tendon injury
 Achilles 496–7
 finger 440t, 441f, 448
 hand 459
 patella 492
 quadriceps 492
 in wounds 412
 tendonitis 433
 tenecteplase 81
 tennis elbow 466
 tenosynovitis 433, 449
 terrorism, poisoning 188
 testicular problems 544
 children 722
 torsion 544, 723
 trauma 361
 undescended 722
 tetanus 246
 prophylaxis 424
 trauma 330
 tetracaine 293, 298
 TFCC injury 459
 theophylline
 poisoning 208
 thiopental
 (thiopentone) 326
 thoracolumbar spine 392
 thoracotomy 353
 thought blocking 619
 thought broadcasting 619
 thought insertion 619
 thought withdrawal 619
 throat 570–1, 690–3
 examination, children 690, 691f
 foreign bodies 563
 infection 570, 692–3
 sore 570–1
 thrombectomy, stroke 153
 thrombocytopenic purpura, idiopathic 681
 thromboembolic disease, in pregnancy 607, 616
 thrombolysis
 myocardial infarction 80–1
 pulmonary embolus 125
 stroke 152
 thrombophlebitis, superficial 123, 539
 thrombosis, deep vein 122–3
 pregnancy 607
 thrush 582
 thumb, collateral ligament injuries 446, 448
 thyrotoxic crisis 164
 TIA 155
 tibia
 fractures 491, 494
 children 754
 nerve block 314, 315f
 ticks, bites 241, 422
 Tillaux fracture 518
 time-critical illness 61
 TIMI risk score 73t
 Todd's paresis 150, 156
 toddler's fracture 518, 754
 toe fractures 506
 toe injuries 506
 toenails, ingrowing 507
 tongue wounds 478
 tonsillitis 570
 torsades de pointes 91
 torticollis 477
 TOXBASE 188–9

toxic shock syndrome 245, 583
 tracheal intubation 322–5
 children 670
 newborn 660
 trauma 335
 tracheal tube size for children 670
 tracheitis, bacterial 693
 traction apophysitis 730
 tramadol 288
 tranexamic acid 330
 tranquillization,
 emergency 627
 transcutaneous pacing 86–7
 transfer of patient 30–1
 transfusion
 blood 180–3
 massive 182
 reactions 183
 transient global amnesia 141
 transient ischaemic attacks 155
 transplant patients 167
 transplantation of liver, paracetamol poisoning 199
 transport emergency (TREM) card 38
 transvenous pacing 86–7
 trauma
 injury prevention 733
 Injury Severity Score (ISS) 333
 major 328–407
 paediatric 732
 paediatric resuscitation 734–5
 in pregnancy 612–13
 Revised Trauma Score 333
 Treatment Escalation Plans 25
 trench foot 267
 triage 9
 mental health 628
 triangular fibrocartilage complex injury 459
 tricyclic antidepressant poisoning 202–3
 trigeminal neuralgia 138
 trigger finger/thumb 449
 TRISS methodology 333
 tropical diseases 254
 troponins 75
 trouble
 aggressive patient 624
 avoidance of 32–3, 624
 violence/violent patients 624–7
 tuberculosis 242, 701

tuberculous meningitis 233
 tympanic membrane
 rupture 567
 typhoid 256

U

ulcerative colitis 533
 ulcerative keratitis 559
 ulipristal acetate 585
 ulna, fractures 460,
 461f, 751
 ulnar nerve block 306, 307f
 ulnar nerve injury 440t, 467
 ultrasound
 diagnosis of DVT 122–3, 607
 for nerve blocks 302, 313
 in pregnancy 592, 595,
 597, 598, 599,
 601, 603
 in trauma (FAST) 355, 613
 for venous access 58, 655
 umbilical cord sepsis 676
 umbilical vein
 cannulation 661
 unconscious patient 142–4
 upper gastrointestinal tract bleeding 126–7
 upper respiratory tract infections, children 692–3, 693t
 ureteric colic 540–1
 urethral carbuncle 581
 urethral injuries 360
 urethritis 248, 513, 543
 urinary discoloration,
 causes 712t
 urinary retention 542
 urinary tract infections (UTIs) 168–9, 605
 children 710–11
 urine microscopy 168, 711t
 urticaria, neonatal 678
 USS see ultrasound
 uterine bleeding 590
 uterine carcinoma 591
 uterine problems 588
 uterine rupture 612
 uterine size, pregnancy 594f
 uveitis 558

V

vaccines, immunization 652t
 vaginal bleeding 590–1
 in pregnancy 596–7, 602–3
 vaginal discharge 582–3
 vaginal infection 582
 Valsalva manoeuvre 92
 varicella zoster 235
 varices 127
 varicose veins 539
 vasa praevia 603
 vascular access complications, dialysis patients 167
 vecuronium 327
 venereal proctitis 535
 venous access
 central 58–9
 children 654–5
 choice of vein 58
 cut down 655
 intra-osseous 656–7, 657f
 umbilical vein 661
 venous blood gases 103
 venous thrombo-embolism (VTE)
 prevention 503
 risk assessment 503t
 venous thrombosis 122–3
 cerebral 139
 in pregnancy 607
 venous ulcers 539
 ventilation
 in asthma 111, 695
 in children 670
 in COPD 113
 hyperventilation 101
 in newborn 658
 mouth-to-mouth 50, 662
 non-invasive 113
 ventricular activation time 76
 ventricular shunts 138
 ventricular tachycardia 91
 children 668, 672
 vertebral artery dissection 377
 vertebrobasilar insufficiency 573
 vertigo 572–3
 causes 572t
 vestibular neuronitis 573
 vestibular schwannoma 573
 violence/violent patients 624–7
 intoxication 639
 viral arthritis 512
 viral haemorrhagic fevers 258
 virtual fracture clinic 436
 visual acuity 550
 visual loss, sudden 556–7
 vitreous haemorrhage 557
 volar plate injury 448
 volatile situations, defusing 20
 volvulus 531f, 532, 720
 vomiting
 bilious vomiting in babies 677

hyperemesis
 gravidarium 595
von Willebrand's disease
 174, 176
vulval ulcers 581
vulvovaginal problems
 581

W

warfarin 178, 179
wasp stings 422
weakness,
 generalized 148–9
Weber classification 499t
Weber's test 565
weight estimation,
 children 649
Weil's disease 249
Wells criteria 122–3,
 123t, 124t
Wernicke's
 encephalopathy 641
whole-bowel irrigation 193
whooping cough 700
Wilm's tumour 721

Wolff–Parkinson–White
 syndrome 92
worms 240
wounds 410–25
 of abdomen 358
 aftercare 418
 antibiotics 420, 428
 bites/stings 420–1
 of chest 350–1
 child abuse 760
 in children 741
 classification 411
 cleaning 414
 closure 415
 delayed primary closure 418
 ear 478
 exploration 412
 foreign bodies in 413
 of hand 442–3
 infection 245, 419, 421
 lip 478
 of neck 386
 oral 478
 post-surgical
 complications 548
 puncture 413

tendon injury 442
of tongue 478
X-rays 412
wrist
 anatomy 438
 dislocations 452, 453
 fractures 450–7
 nerve blocks 306–8,
 307f, 308f

X

X-rays
 ankle 501f
 children 744, 746
 in pregnancy 592
 reporting system 8
 requests 8

Z

zika virus 235
zip entrapment of foreskin
 724, 725f
zygomatic (malar) fractures 382

