



PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT: RED FLAG FINDINGS

Checklist for healthcare professionals to identify a potential victim of sex trafficking with some red flags. Test your knowledge!

HISTORY RED FLAGS

- Has a much older boyfriend if a minor?
- Accompanied by a controlling family member or boyfriend who does all the talking?
- Dressed inappropriately for the weather?
- Multiple cell phones? One cellphone having contact of the trafficker, with limited contacts?
- A large amount of cash?
- Pays the bill in cash?
- Has multiple pre-paid cards in their possession?
- Expensive clothes, purses, jewelry?
- Truant? Missing class, grades dropping, behavior change?
- Does not have an ID or passport or possesses a fake ID?
- Does not know their address or where they are traveling to?
- Uses trafficking vocabulary/lingo?

PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT RED FLAGS

ENT:

- Neck pain from frequent, forced oral sex?
- Petechia to the throat or palate can be a result of frequent, forced oral sex.
- Broken or missing teeth? Tooth decay?

Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN):

- Sexually transmitted infection in a minor? Frequent PID?
- Vaginal tearing, vaginal trauma, profuse bleeding?
- Numerous sexual partners? Much older boyfriend (cultural consideration)?
- Repeated unplanned pregnancies, numerous abortions?
- Delayed care for a ruptured ectopic? No, follow up BHCG or US?
- Retained foreign bodies or debris in the vaginal vault? Traffickers pack the vagina while on their menstrual cycle (Tracy, et.al., 2012)
- Anogenital trauma? (Sabella, 2011).
- Sexually explicit tattoos near or on the genitalia (mons pubis, sacrum/buttocks)? Imply advertisement of a product and violate common sense as to why would put that on their body?
- Frequent UTI in a minor (controversial)?
- Prenatal Care? • _Low back pain from being forced to walk the streets in high heels (acf.hhs.gov, SOAR)?

Musculoskeletal:

- Chronic back pain with no organic cause?
- Bruising on the back, buttocks, posterior thighs, posterior calves, posterior neck?
- Tattoos that imply ownership, e.g., crown with initials, dollar sign, bar code, Property of with initials.



Gastrointestinal:

- Irritable bowel Syndrome (IBS)?
- Heartburn?
- Abdomen pain with no organic cause (functional GI symptoms)?
- A retained foreign body in the anus?
- Anogenital trauma?

SIGNS OF TORTURE/ABUSE

- Bruising or trauma to the posterior aspect of the neck? (hard to injure in this area and typically non-accidental).
- Injuries to both sides of the body?
- Injuries with particular patterns?
- Petechia to the throat or palate can mean frequent oral sex.
- Petechial to the conjunctiva and around the eyes can signal a strangulation injury.
- Delays in presentation, medical care?
- Untreated injuries: e.g., a wound that should have been closed with sutures and is now infected?
- Infected puncture wound? Cellulitis from intravenous drug use?
- Injuries to the ears? Both ears? Pinch Marks?
- Abrasions over bony prominences?
- Scratches or linear abrasions from a wire?
- Small discoid or ovoid bruising in clusters may represent when a person has been forcibly gripped. Sites are the inner thighs in a sexual assault, the face and trunk in children, neck, and arms (Forensic Medicine for Medical Students).
- Elongated, broad-type abrasions (ropes may leave an area of bruising mixed with abrasions).
- Bruising, abrasions, lacerations to the chest, back, neck, or buttocks?
- Road-Rash to the extremities from being thrown out of or drug by a vehicle?
- Belts or cords may have loop marks, and parallel lines of petechial with central sparing.
- Patterned bruising may be from a belt buckle.
- Tramline bruising, two parallel lines of bruising, can result from being beaten with a heavy stick, baseball bat, or baton (Tsokos, 2015).
- Cigarette burns tend to be circular with a 1 cm diameter, come in clusters, and can fade in a few hours or a few days.
- Burns, in general, tend to take the shape of the object that inflicted the burn.

References:

- Tracy, Erin E., MD, MPH; Konstantopoulos, Wendy Macias, MD, MPH, Human Trafficking: A Call for Heightened Awareness and Advocacy by Obstetrician- _Gynecologists *Obstetrics & Gynecology*: May 2012 - Volume 119 - Issue 5 - p 1045–1047. DOI: 10.1097/AOG.0b013e31824f9aaa
- <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/archive/otip/resource/soarhealthcare>
- Sabella, D. (2011). The role of the nurse in combating human trafficking. *The American Journal of Nursing*, 111 2, 28-37; quiz 38-9.
- <http://www.forensicmed.co.uk/wounds/blunt-force-trauma/bruises/>
- Source: Tsokos, M. *Forensic Sci Med Pathol* (2015) 11: 235. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12024- 015>