

What happens next?

When we are able to quickly decide whether or not we are worried that your child might have been harmed by someone, we will tell you about our findings and conclusions as soon as we can.

If it takes longer for our doctors to form an opinion because the situation is complex and/or we need to wait for the results of additional tests, then we will tell you about the reasons for the delay and we will keep you informed of progress. Sometimes this process can take several days.

In some circumstances, we will want to talk to your general practitioner or other health professionals who have seen your child. We will ask for your consent to speak to these people.

Child Protection practitioners will keep you informed about the outcome of their investigations and police will keep you informed about the outcome of the police investigation.

VFPMS clinic locations and contact details

VFPMS clinic at The Royal Children's Hospital

Specialist Clinic C
Level 1, East Building
50 Flemington Road, Parkville Victoria 3052
CLINIC TELEPHONE (03) 9345 4299
ADMINISTRATION TELEPHONE (03) 9345 9075
24-HOUR TELEPHONE 1300 66 11 42
FACSIMILE (03) 9345 4105
EMAIL enquiries@vfpms.org.au

VFPMS clinic at Monash Medical Centre

The Angela Taylor Unit
Level 2, Main Building
246 Clayton Road, Clayton Victoria 3168
CLINIC TELEPHONE (03) 9594 2155
24-HOUR TELEPHONE 1300 66 11 42
FACSIMILE (03) 9594 6328
EMAIL enquiries@vfpms.org.au

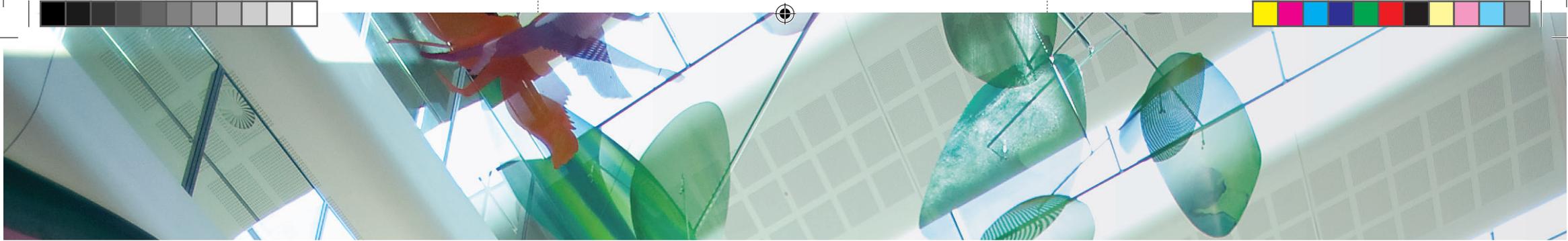
Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service

The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne
50 Flemington Road Parkville
Victoria 3052 Australia
TELEPHONE +61 3 9345 5522
www.rch.org.au



Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service (VFPMS)

Information for parents, caregivers and families of children referred to VFPMS in relation to physical injury



What is the VFPMS?

The VFPMS is a government-funded medical service that assesses children who might have been abused or neglected. The VFPMS has clinics at The Royal Children's Hospital and Monash Medical Centre. The Royal Children's Hospital governs the work of the VFPMS.

Why has your child been referred to the VFPMS?

The VFPMS doctors and nurses have been informed about a concern that someone might have hurt or harmed your child. The VFPMS has been asked to provide a forensic medical opinion about the possible causes of your child's condition or injury.

In Victoria, when mandated professionals including doctors, nurses, teachers and police have concerns such as these, then Child Protection (the statutory child protection agency) must be informed. On almost every occasion that Child Protection become involved then Victoria Police also become involved. The purpose of this policy is not to jump to any conclusions about the cause of a child's condition or findings, but to take a 'safety first' approach.

The VFPMS produces a written medical report for every child seen. This medical report may be released to Child Protection and police.

Our team

The VFPMS team consists of paediatricians and nurses who have undertaken training in forensic paediatric medicine. The VFPMS staff work closely with the doctors, nurses and other staff providing medical care to your child, who will continue to focus on caring for your child's health needs.

What can you expect from the VFPMS?

Usually consent for children's forensic evaluations are obtained from parents or guardians. Sometimes forensic assessments are ordered by the Children's Court of Victoria. We will seek your consent for the forensic evaluation and sharing of information about your child.

We will speak with the doctors and nurses who referred your child to us, and will review any tests or x-rays that have already been done.

We will come to see you to introduce ourselves and explain our assessment to you. If your child was admitted in the late afternoon or evening, we may see you on the following day.

We will ask whether you would like an interpreter to assist us to communicate.

We will ask you in detail about the circumstances that led to your child's admission, anything you can recall that may have caused or contributed to your child's condition or injury, any history of illness in your child or family and background information about your child and family. The doctor will examine your child, and may measure and document the findings including a diagram of any external injuries. When external injuries are present we usually request photographs of injuries.

We understand that the questions we ask you may be upsetting. You will be offered the support of social workers and others. The VFPMS and social workers operate as a team.

We may recommend additional tests.

Will Child Protection be involved?

It is Child Protection's job to investigate reports that a child is in need of protection. If they are informed about your child when he/she is in hospital then they will probably come and talk to you and explain their investigative process to you. They will also probably talk to other members of your family, and may talk to other people who know you and your family. Ask for a business card so that you will remember the name and contact information of the person who spoke with you.

Sometimes people are frightened that Child Protection will take their child away. Although this doesn't happen often, sometimes Child Protection ask that a child stay with a grandparent or a family friend for a few days, while the investigation is taking place.

Will Victoria Police be involved?

It is the job of police to decide whether a crime has been committed, and if so, by whom. They may come and introduce themselves to you in the hospital. They may ask to interview you at a police station, rather than on the ward. One reason for this may be if they need to record the interview, which requires facilities that the hospital does not have. Ask for a business card so that you will remember the name and contact information of the person who spoke with you.