



TEA-BREAK GUIDE



What is Fabricated & Induced Illness (FII)?

FII involves a well child being presented by a carer as ill or disabled, or an ill or disabled child being presented with a more significant problem than he or she has in reality, and suffering harm as a consequence. It is a **relatively rare but potentially lethal** form of abuse (RCPCH, 2009). There are three main ways of the carer deliberately fabricating or inducing illness in a child:

- **Fabrication of symptoms** i.e. false reporting of signs and symptoms, including fabrication of past medical history;
- **Fabrication and falsification** of documents e.g. of hospital records and letters, or interference with specimens, e.g. adding blood to urine samples or nappies.
- **Induction of illness** by a variety of means, such as administering medicines or other substances.

FII is most easily recognised when a child is repeatedly presented to **health professionals** with unusual, frequent and unexplained symptoms.

Other professionals, in particular in schools, may have concerns about problems including frequent reported but not observed symptoms, or where parental and school views on the child's health and development are very different. Often, attendance or participation is significantly reduced without an adequate medical explanation.

Focus on Harm: FII is a rare form of abuse; in many more cases, unusual or unexplained symptoms are not deliberately fabricated, and parental behaviour is driven by other factors such as anxiety or abnormal beliefs. Whether or not the carer is deliberately fabricating a child's illness, professional focus needs to be on whether the child is suffering or at risk of harm e.g. through frequent hospital admissions or attendances, or unnecessary and invasive medical investigations or treatments; missing out significantly on education, daily life and social activities; considering themselves, or being presented inappropriately, as sick or disabled.

Highest risk: The risk is highest when there is deliberate induction of illness, particularly in babies or very young children. This may be through a range of mechanisms e.g. **partial asphyxiation, deliberate undernutrition, administration of medicines.**

What are possible indicators of FII?

- Reported symptoms not explained by known or suspected medical condition.
- Physical examination/investigation results do not explain reported symptoms
- There is an inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment, or poor weight gain despite an apparently adequate diet.
- New symptoms are reported on resolution of previous ones.
- Reported symptoms are not observed in the absence of the carer
- Over time the child is repeatedly presented with a range of symptoms, to different professionals, in a variety of settings.
- The child's normal, daily life activities are being curtailed beyond what might be expected from any known medical disorder the child might have.

What do I do if I am concerned about a child?

Develop a chronology of all relevant information, including symptoms and other information e.g. health history, diagnoses, as reported by the carer. Seek advice from health safeguarding leads – in schools and other settings, advice should be sought initially from the school nurse or health visitor. It may be possible to work collaboratively with parents to manage health concerns in schools. Do not share concerns about deliberate fabrication with parents.

How do I report suspected FII?

Where there is direct evidence of immediate life threatening or significant physical harm, the police must be called immediately (**Call 999**), in order to safeguard the child and secure evidence.

Other cases of suspected FII should be referred via the MASH. Police and children's social care services will require clear guidance from health professionals on the probability of FII.

Call MASH on: 0300 126 1000

Website: <https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/Pages/default.aspx> - Help and Protection for Children.