

# Birth Trauma

Perinatal Services – Maternity

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**



# Introduction

This leaflet talks about what birth trauma is and the help that is available for those who go through it.

## What is birth trauma?

For most parents childbirth, though painful, is a positive time in their lives.

Sadly, one in four people who give birth may have had a difficult time and felt their birth was traumatic. This could be because they felt scared, helpless or out of control.

Some people have very strong symptoms of distress which could be post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Birth trauma after a labour or birth that felt shocking, dangerous or frightening will have a strong effect on your emotions.

You may struggle to feel safe, confident and calm. This can also have an effect on relationships because of these strange, strong and upsetting feelings.

Birthing partners can also be affected by a traumatic birth experience.

## What might have caused my birth trauma?

- A very long and distressing labour and/or delivery
- An unplanned procedure by the medical team
- Feeling out of control or helpless
- Not understanding what is happening
- Being worried about you or your baby's safety
- Feeling like you were not listened to.

## How may birth trauma affect me?

- Looking back, you might have felt like you were watching yourself and not really there
- Feeling anxious all of the time
- Finding it hard to think or talk about your birth
- Repeated flashbacks, nightmares or sad thoughts about your birth
- Feeling on edge as if you are waiting for something bad to happen
- Needing to talk a lot about your birth
- Wanting to stay away from places or people that may bring back memories of your birth.

## How might I feel?

- Agitated and anxious
- Irritable
- Angry
- Frightened
- Numb
- On edge
- Guilty
- Like you have failed
- Like you are a bad mum
- Like it was your fault
- Cry and get upset when thinking or talking about it
- As if you are waiting for another bad thing to happen
- Unable to celebrate your birth
- Hard to sleep
- Cannot relax
- Hard to concentrate
- Wanting to hide away

- Unable to stop thinking about what happened
- Having bad thoughts about your birth
- Finding it hard to care for your baby
- Wanting to stay away from places or people
- Scared to visit places that remind you of your birth.

No one else can tell you how you should feel about what happened or give you a time scale on accessing help.

Other people cannot judge if your birth was traumatic or incredibly hard for you.

You or your baby do not have to have been at risk of death or facing a serious injury for the birth to have been traumatic.

Your feelings are important and your experience matters.

## What can I do to help my recovery?

- Talk to your partner, family or friends about your feelings
- Talk to someone who was there with you
- Get your feelings validated
- Accept help caring for your baby so you can have a short break
- Accept help around the home and with meals
- Think about joining a local support group
- Speak to a professional; see below for more details on who you can talk to.

Most people who experience trauma make a good recovery, even if they feel really distressed at first.

Professional support may be needed to help you recover. Do not be frightened or feel ashamed to ask for help.

## Who can help?

- Your Community Midwife  
Call 01902 695140 (Monday to Friday 9.00am - 2.30pm)
- Your GP
- Your Health Visitor.

Depending on the help you need, they may refer you to the:

- Birth Reflections Service
- Birth Trauma Service
- Maternal Mental Health Service
- Perinatal Mental Health Service
- NHS Talking Therapies.

### **NHS Talking Therapies service**

You can also self-refer to this service here: [www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-apsychological-therapies-service/](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-apsychological-therapies-service/)

## Where can I find more information?

### **Tommy's**

[www.tommys.org-information/after-birth/recovering-difficult-birth](http://www.tommys.org-information/after-birth/recovering-difficult-birth)

### **Birth Trauma Association (BTA)**

[www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk](http://www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk)

The BTA also have a private Facebook support group which is run by others who have experienced birth trauma: [www.facebook.com/groups/TheBTA](https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheBTA)

### **Make Births Better**

[www.makebirthbetter.org/birth-trauma-support-for-parents](http://www.makebirthbetter.org/birth-trauma-support-for-parents)



## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。