

If you have any difficulties getting a copy of your notes please contact us for advice or contact the Freedom for Information Campaign, Suite 102, 16 Baldwins Gardens, London EC1N 7RJ.

## WHAT CAN I DO IF I DON'T UNDERSTAND MY RECORDS?

It will probably be really helpful for you to go through your notes with a medical professional, so that you can understand them properly.

You might want to contact your health visitor or community midwife for advice on arranging an appointment with a suitable professional. Or you could contact your hospital and ask to see the Consultant who was in charge of your case or another doctor or midwife.

Before the appointment with a health care professional, it might be a good idea to write down all the questions you want to ask and all those things that are bothering you. You can then use this in your meeting to make sure you cover all your concerns.

If you do have a meeting, it is a good idea to have someone else with you to support you and help you ask questions.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any more questions about this.

## WHO ARE WE ?

The Birth Trauma Association was established in 2004 to support women suffering from Post Natal PTSD and to offer

basic advice and support to women who are traumatised by childbirth but who do not have PTSD

We are not trained counsellors or therapists or medical professionals. We are mothers who wish to support other women who have suffered traumatic births.

Our board members include leading figures in both research and practice relating to PTSD. We are campaigning vigorously to change any current practices which contribute to traumatic birth experiences, to increase awareness of this problem generally and to demand more help for women in need.

We can be contacted at:

- The Birth Trauma Association  
PO Box 671  
Ipswich  
IP1 9AT
- [www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk](http://www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk)
- [support@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk](mailto:support@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk)



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## YOUR MATERNITY RECORDS

### YOUR RIGHTS

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You may wish to obtain copies of your maternity records after childbirth to:

- Gain some understanding of your birth experience
- Fill in the blanks in your memory
- Talk to someone about a difficult birth experience

This leaflet sets out your rights and aims to guide you through the process.

## **I NEED TO UNDERSTAND MY CHILDBIRTH EXPERIENCE**

Childbirth is such a huge event that even when everything goes well, it can be difficult to take it all in.

Many women who have suffered difficult or traumatic childbirth experiences find themselves constantly going over the events in their mind, trying to make sense of it all.

Some women will be unhappy at the level of care they have received; others will simply want to understand more about one of their most important life experiences.

Obtaining a copy of your hospital records might be the first step in actually answering the important question - *'what happened to me?'*

## **DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO A COPY OF MY RECORDS?**

Put simple, YES!

You have the right to be sent a copy of both your records and those of your baby under the Access to Health Records Act 1990 and the Data Protection Act 1998. This applies to all records made after November 1991.

## **WHEN SHOULD I OBTAIN A COPY OF MY RECORDS?**

Many women return to hospital to discuss their birth experience with a consultant or a midwife. It is a good idea to obtain a copy of your records before you do this.

Otherwise, it is a matter for you but it may be advisable to write for a copy if you feel there are unresolved issues connected to your childbirth experience which are causing you some concern or confusion.

## **HOW DO I OBTAIN A COPY OF MY RECORDS?**

You should write to the Medical Records Department at the hospital which dealt with you. You need to ask for copies of everything on your file, including your notes, records, computer print outs, laboratory tests and correspondence. You should do the same for your baby's file.

If you had a home birth, write to the hospital where the midwives who cared for you are employed - this is likely to be the hospital nearest you.

Your health visitor might be able to help you with any questions you might have about obtaining these records.

Most hospitals will then ask you to sign a form and send in proof of your identity before releasing your records.

## **WHAT WILL IT COST ME?**

You are entitled to a free viewing of your records if you apply within 40 days of your last appointment. If you require copies, you can be charged up to £50.00 for them. Women tell us that most hospitals actually charge in the region of £10-20. However, it is an entirely discretionary fee which means that it is up to the individual hospital to decide whether to charge it. Hospitals do have the power to waive the fee if they feel it is appropriate.

The fee is meant to cover administration or photocopying charges.

Your records must be sent to you within 40 days. You might want to keep proof of the letter you send asking for these records, e.g. you could send it recorded delivery.

## **WHAT CAN I DO IF I CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY FOR MY RECORDS?**

If you really want to see your notes and cannot afford to pay, you do have the right to view your notes for free. You should write to your hospital about this or contact us for more advice.

## **WHAT CAN I DO IF THE HOSPITAL WON'T SEND ME MY RECORDS?**

Some women have reported that their hospitals have been evasive or slow about sending on their records.