

Where do I go for help?

If you feel that you are experiencing some of the problems set out in this leaflet, please remember that you are not alone and that you are not to blame. However, it is important that you seek help.

You will need to find someone who will be sympathetic and understanding. You may find these options helpful:

- Your GP
- Your midwife
- Your Health visitor
- A counsellor
- Family and friends
- Our website offers more guidance at www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

Awareness about this problem varies enormously, so if you do not feel that your health professional understands, then please show them this leaflet or contact us for more advice.

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.

Many thanks to T.A.B.S - Trauma and Birth Stress (www.tabs.org.nz) - New Zealand, for their help with this leaflet.

Write to us at:

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the

birth trauma association

helping people traumatised by childbirth

POST NATAL POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PN PTSD)

If you have given birth and suffer from...

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Panic attacks
- Numbed emotions
- Sleeping difficulties
- Problems with concentration
- Irritability or anger...



then please read on, this
leaflet is for you...

What is PTSD?

PTSD is the term for a set of normal reactions to a traumatic, scary or bad experience. Characteristic features of PTSD include:

1. An experience involving the threat of death or serious injury to an individual or another person close to them (e.g. their baby).
2. A response of intense fear, helplessness or horror to that experience.
3. The persistent re-experiencing of the event by way of recurrent intrusive memories, flashbacks and nightmares. The individual will usually feel distressed, anxious or panicky when exposed to things which remind them of the event
4. Avoidance of anything that reminds them of the trauma (this includes talking about it).
5. Bad memories and the need to avoid any reminders of the trauma, will often result in difficulties with sleeping and concentrating. Sufferers may also feel angry, irritable and be hyper vigilant (feel jumpy or on their guard all the time).

Visit our website:

www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

Who gets Post Natal PTSD (PN PTSD)?

Research has suggested that as many as 10,000 cases of Post Natal PTSD arise in the UK each year. There are also many more women who suffer some of the symptoms of PTSD without developing the complete disorder.

It has been noted that risk factors for Post Natal PTSD include:

- Lengthy labour or short and very painful labour
- Induction
- Poor pain relief
- Feelings of loss of control
- Traumatic or emergency deliveries
- Impersonal treatment or problems with the staff attitudes
- Not being listened to
- Lack of information or explanation
- Lack of privacy and dignity
- Baby's stay in SCBU/NICU
- Poor postnatal care
- Previous trauma (for example, in childhood, with a previous birth or domestic violence)

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What problems are specific to PN PTSD?

Women who suffer PTSD symptoms after childbirth frequently find themselves very isolated by their experience and detached from other mothers. This can make them lonely and depressed.

They may feel they are somehow 'weaker' than other women because they are unable to forget their birth experience, despite being told by others to 'put it behind them' and 'move on'. They may feel guilty as a result.

Many women end up feeling torn between their desire for more children and their determination to avoid another pregnancy. Women may also lose interest in sex and these problems can place a great strain on relationships.

It has been said that women may also try and avoid other types of medical care. Worryingly, this can include the investigation and treatment of abnormal cervical smears

Many women find it difficult to bond with their baby as a result of the trauma they have experienced.

When do the symptoms appear?

PTSD symptoms may start soon after childbirth or they could be delayed for months. The symptoms may persist for a long time and can result in other problems such as depression. Unfortunately, this means that many women are wrongly diagnosed with Post Natal Depression and are prescribed medication which may do little, or nothing, to help their situation.