

## ABOUT US

In the early days of parenthood it is not uncommon for women or their partners to feel isolated and alone.

### Philosophy

The ABTA philosophy is built around the emotional needs of the mother. They are equally as important as a healthy baby.

### Family

Immediate family of women experiencing birth-related trauma (both fathers and children) should be included in early and appropriate intervention to effectively identify and treat the condition as well as support those around the women in need.

We believe that more work needs to be done to understand, and in turn better support, the emotional and physical needs of mothers and partners affected by birth trauma.

### Health Professionals

We work alongside Health Professionals who are interested in gaining a greater understanding of the needs of women suffering from birth trauma and thus help effect change to current practice.

We invite you to join us to help continue our support and services throughout Australia and New Zealand as we work to improve the lives of many thousands of families currently affected by birth trauma.

## ABTA RESOURCES

Our goal is to raise awareness and understanding of both physical and psychological birth trauma

Our website has information and downloadable resources available.

### These will help to:

Provide emotional and practical support to women and their partners who have experienced trauma from childbirth.

Offer education for the array of Health Professionals involved in the care of women and their families.

Provide up-to-date research in the area for possible prevention of trauma and ways to move forward if trauma occurs.

“ I was asking myself: 'If others are coping really well, why am I not?'

Judy

The information provided is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between a patient/user and his/her/their existing health professional/s.

This brochure has been reviewed and approved by the ABTA Advisory Board. Your privacy is important and our Privacy Policy can be found at [www.birthtrauma.org.au](http://www.birthtrauma.org.au). Last Reviewed February 2020. Queries in relation to this document can be submitted to [support@birthtrauma.org.au](mailto:support@birthtrauma.org.au). This resource does not host or receive funding from advertising. © Australasian Birth Trauma Association 2020. ABTA0024G. Designed by BrandUnity.

# BIRTH-RELATED TRAUMA SUPPORT

Find more resources, support and guidance visit  
[birthtrauma.org.au](http://birthtrauma.org.au)



This leaflet contains information on the physical and psychological symptoms that can occur following a traumatic birth experience.

Please seek help if you are experiencing any of these symptoms. You may wish to find more information available on our website or with your health professional.

## SUPPORTING YOU

The Australasian Birth Trauma Association (ABTA), is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2016 to support women and their families who are suffering from physical and /or psychological trauma resulting from the birth process.



*We need to break the taboo over talking about birth trauma and challenge the myth that all that matters is a healthy baby.*

*Amy*

We seek to assist women and families through their own journey after a traumatic birth by providing them with the information, resources, and support required to manage their symptoms while raising a family, participating in the workforce and being active in their community.

Aspects of the birth process, such as perineal or vaginal tears, emergency interventions, severe bleeding or an unwell baby, can be terrifying at the time and trigger ongoing psychological problems, such as traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

### Physical symptoms may include:

- Pain around the site of the episiotomy or tear in the perineum (between vagina & anus) after birth
- Urinary or faecal incontinence
- Difficulty opening and emptying bowels
- Pain or difficulty having sex
- Constant lower back pain
- Awareness of a bulge or lump at the vaginal opening
- A dragging feeling in the pelvis or a sense that something is 'falling out' - this symptom may be increased by standing, lifting, tiredness or at period.
- Vaginal or pelvic floor muscle laxity

Recent research demonstrates that physical injury incurred during vaginal delivery can have similarly serious consequences, both physically and psychologically, and that such injuries are more common than previously acknowledged.

### Psychological symptoms may include:

- Feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror in reaction to reminders of the experience, for example words, smells, rooms, clinicians
- Fear and anxiety about going outside
- Poor self-image
- Memories (flashbacks) of the traumatic vaginal delivery during sexual relations
- Trying to push feelings away and get on with looking after your baby
- Difficulty sleeping due to bad memories or reminders of the birth
- Nightmares regarding the birth
- Feelings of isolation
- Irritability and guilt
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Avoiding reminders of the traumatic birth such as the location where it occurred (avoidance reactions)
- Feeling emotionally numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings
- Sweating, shaking, headaches, dizziness, gastrointestinal upsets and chest pains not connected with medical condition
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Struggling to bond with your baby

Please seek help if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.



Contact us at ABTA to find out more about support for yourself and your family.

email: [support@birthtrauma.org.au](mailto:support@birthtrauma.org.au)  
[birthtrauma.org.au](http://birthtrauma.org.au)  
[www.facebook.com/groups/birthtrauma.org.au](https://www.facebook.com/groups/birthtrauma.org.au)

*You may also wish to talk to your GP, Midwife or Health Visitor about how you feel. Awareness of problems, whether physical or psychological, varies greatly. Use this leaflet to help explain how you are feeling with your Health Professional.*