

Understanding Psychological Birth Trauma and Distress

What is Psychological Birth Trauma and How Do We Treat It?



What is Psychological Birth Trauma (P-BT)?

Some people feel distress during or after birth. This feeling is called **psychological birth trauma (P-BT)**. You may experience P-BT if your birth experience felt hard or scary for you, or if your birth experience was different from what you planned. P-BT can happen when birth feels emotionally traumatic, with or without physical trauma. P-BT is a common experience.

If you have P-BT, you may feel sad, scared, numb, or upset. You may feel guilty about what happened. You may have bad dreams about your birth experience. You may not want to talk about your birth experience.

Why Do I Feel This Way?

People are more likely to have P-BT if they:

- Have a difficult birth;
- Feel like they are not in control during your birth experience;
- Have a medical emergency during your birth experience;
- Do not get the support they expected;
- Have a baby who is sick and needs extra care.

Possible Effects of P-BT?

- P-BT can make it difficult to feel close to your baby. Feeling close to your baby is called bonding. It is important for babies and parents.
- P-BT can also make it difficult to breastfeed your baby.
- If you have P-BT, you are more likely to have other mood problems, like postpartum anxiety and postpartum depression. You may also experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is when bad memories return and upset you.



How Can I Get Help?

P-BT can make it difficult to function after birth. If you or a loved one is struggling after a birth, it is important to get help.

Getting help is the best thing you can do for yourself and your family.

If you have P-BT, you are not alone. The first step is to **acknowledge** that your birth experience upset you. It can help to talk about your experience and emotions with a doctor, psychologist or counsellor. They may suggest different ways to cope, like doing relaxing activities, or talking about your birth experience in a safe and supportive way. You may also want to join a support group where you can talk to others with similar experiences.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

PB-T is a common experience, and we know how to help. **Reach out to a doctor or counselor**, or find out more through our online resources.

General 604.875.2424

Toll-free (BC) 1.888.300.3088

Resources



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