

RECOGNIZING BIRTH TRAUMA

Birth trauma is a perceived threat of serious injury to a parent or child during childbirth. In some, but not all cases, it can lead to the development of postpartum PTSD. For more information, see our [Recognizing Postpartum PTSD](#) resource.

SITUATIONS THAT MAY GIVE RISE TO BIRTH TRAUMA INCLUDE:

» Emergency C-section

» Preeclampsia or eclampsia

» Induction or lengthy labor

» Feeling unsupported by staff

» Baby being rushed to the NICU

» Use of vacuum and/or forceps

Giving birth can be the most painful and uncontrollable experience a person endures. Patients may believe that they are in a life-threatening medical situation even if their medical team does not have the same impression.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY BIRTH TRAUMA?

While the birthing person is the most vulnerable, the support person can also be affected. Especially if the life of their loved one or new baby are threatened or if they must make a critical decision on behalf of the birthing person.



CAN BIRTH TRAUMA BE PREVENTED?

» It is impossible to know how someone is feeling about the birthing experience and whether it will lead to birth trauma.

» Healthcare workers can alleviate potential birth trauma by actively listening to patients, explaining procedures, involving patients in the birth process as much as possible, and regularly checking in with the birthing person and their support person.

» More details can be found in our [Being Responsive to Birth Trauma](#) resource.