SHADES of BLUE PROJECT

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Birth trauma and postpartum PTSD

You do not have to minimize your story

A difficult birth can stay with you. Your baby's health does not erase your emotional experience or your need for care.

01 Notice trauma symptoms

- Nightmares, unwanted memories, or feeling as though the birth is happening again can be signs to discuss. [2]
- Avoiding appointments or reminders, feeling constantly on guard, guilt, anger, or detachment may also deserve attention. [2]
- Birth trauma does not always lead to PTSD. A clinician considers symptoms, duration, and effects on daily life. [1, 2]

02 Ask for support

- Tell your obstetric clinician, midwife, primary care professional, or therapist what feels difficult and what you need.
- Ask for someone experienced in trauma and perinatal mental health. PTSD treatment can include therapy, medication, or both. [2]
- Try: "Memories of my birth are affecting my sleep and sense of safety. I would like an assessment."

03 Prepare for future care

- Ask clinicians to explain examinations, seek your permission, and agree on a signal to pause when medically possible.
- Bring a trusted support person if you wish. You can discuss reviewing your birth records when you feel ready.
- Ask for transportation, meals, or childcare while attending care. You do not have to tell your story publicly to recover.

You can seek help before a diagnosis is made. Being heard is part of respectful care.

YOUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Find support shadesofblueproject.org/support **Request services →**

U.S. immediate danger or suspected psychosis: call 911 or go to an emergency department. **Suicidal crisis or emotional distress:** call 988 or text 988.

Maternal support: call or text 1 833 852 6262. Free, confidential, 24/7. HRSA. Not a crisis line.

Sources [1] West London NHS Perinatal Mental Health Symptoms and… [2] NIMH Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Educational information, not a diagnosis. Updated November 17, 2026.