



**BIRTH
TRAUMA
ASSOCIATION**

I want to avoid another traumatic birth. What can I do and what are my rights?

Should I get pregnant again?

You might feel unsure about whether to have another baby after a traumatic birth. How can you decide?

- If you haven't already had a birth debrief, you can ask for one. This will help you to understand what happened in your previous birth and what steps you could take to stop it happening again. See our FAQ: "How do I ask for a birth debrief?"
- You can ask for an appointment with the head of midwifery or consultant at your local maternity unit to discuss your options



What could I say in the meeting?

You can ask them:

- About how likely it would be that a similar emergency will happen again – for example, a postpartum haemorrhage, shoulder dystocia or pre-eclampsia
- What measures they could put in place to reduce the risk of that happening
- Whether they'd be willing to accommodate your specific wishes next time round



What are my rights?

- You have the right to have a planned (elective) caesarean
- You have the right to choose to give birth at a different hospital from the one where you had a traumatic birth
- You have the right to give birth at home
- You have the right to give birth unattended by medical professionals. This is sometimes known as free birth



What if the hospital refuses my request?

- Some hospitals will try to discourage you from having a planned caesarean
- If that happens, refer them to the NICE guideline on caesarean birth, which says that maternal requests for caesarean should be respected:
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng192/>
- You can find helpful advice about requesting caesareans at:
<https://caesareanbirth.org/>
- The charity Birthrights can offer advice more generally about your rights in birth: <https://www.birthrights.org.uk/>

Make sure you're in a good place

If you feel traumatised from your previous birth, there's a risk that you might spend the whole pregnancy feeling anxious about the birth.

It's a good idea to get in the best possible frame of mind before becoming pregnant again. Having specialist therapy to treat trauma can help. See our FAQ on "Accessing support for birth trauma" for more information.



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Try to make an informed decision

All birth carries some level of risk. The risk will vary according to individual factors, such as how many babies you've already had, whether you've had complications in your previous birth, how old you are, your ethnic background and how big your baby is.

Do try and find out as much as you can about your individual risks so that you can weigh up the risks against the benefits of different choices. Doing that will help you feel more in control.



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How can I prepare for a subsequent birth?

- Think about having therapy or counselling, if you haven't done so already. Some maternity units offer a psychological service to support women who are pregnant again after previous birth trauma
- You might want to try anxiety-reducing techniques such as mindfulness or hypnotherapy
- Discuss with your midwife any particular requirements you have for the birth and ask for it to be recorded on your notes
- Join our Facebook group (www.facebook.com/groups/TheBTA) and ask others what worked for them
- You might want to wear a BTA wristband requesting trauma-informed care

Useful sources of information

The NHS website is a good place to look for information.

- You can search for the hospital where you are thinking of giving birth and find out the CQC rating and Friends and Family score:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/hospital>

- This explains the pros and cons of different places of birth:

<https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/labour-and-birth/preparing-for-the-birth/where-to-give-birth-the-options/>

- This explains what a caesarean section involves and outlines the risks:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/caesarean-section/>