

# BIRTH TRAUMA CARE GUIDE

There are many different types of healthcare providers who can assist in diagnosis and provide treatment for the management of birth-related trauma. This guide aims to identify the different types of providers and explain their role in the care of women and people.

This information is provided to provide individuals with a basic knowledge of what is available so they can be active participants in the decision-making process for their care. We encourage you to ask questions, source quality information, seek second opinions, and trust your intuition when navigating your post-trauma treatment options.

*This can be a roller coaster journey so the support of family and friends during this time is important.*



## PHYSICAL TRAUMA

## PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA



### GENERAL PRACTITIONER (GP)

A GP is often a person's first point of care. There are three main roles of a GP:

#### Assessment

The GP should be asking you post birth about your experience both physically and psychologically.

#### Referral

The GP should be referring you to appropriate specialists for further assessment and investigation of treatment options.

#### Coordination

The GP should be checking in with you, as well as other professionals (if a multidisciplinary care team is involved) to support the patient and their family.

#### Some tips when seeing a GP

It is important to ask your GP whether you qualify for a chronic disease management plan as this may assist with the financial cost of care. Book a double appointment so you have the time to cover what you need to discuss. If you are taking your baby with you to the check up, they will often spend most of the time checking the baby's health and not much time on your health. You can also talk to your GP about a mental health plan to help you address these issues.

### Pelvic Health Physiotherapist

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy is a specialisation of the physiotherapy profession that focuses specifically on the pelvic health of women, men, and children. Physiotherapists generally use a combination of verbal assessment, ultrasound, and internal examination to diagnose pelvic floor dysfunction or injury.

Their patients may be experiencing issues such as incontinence, prolapse, constipation, bed wetting, pre and post-operative care for pelvic or prostate surgery, pelvic and perineal pain, pudendal neuralgia, bladder pain, vulvar pain and vaginismus. Pelvic Floor Physiotherapists are interested in muscle strengthening or relaxation and stretching (as appropriate), bladder and bowel function and pain control strategies.

### Gynaecologist

Gynecologists are doctors who specialise in the health of the female reproductive system. They treat issues such as breast problems, irregular menstrual periods, and cancers of the female organs.

### Obstetrician

An obstetrician is a type of gynaecologist who specialises in pregnancy and childbirth.

### OB/GYN

An OB/GYN specialist is trained in and practices both obstetrics and gynaecology.

### Urogynaecologist

A urogynaecologist is a doctor with specialised training in urology, gynaecology and obstetrics who focuses on the evaluation and treatment of conditions concerning the female pelvic organs and their supporting muscles and tissues, as well as pelvic reconstructive surgery.

### Colorectal Surgeon

A colorectal surgeon is a surgeon who specialises in the management of disorders of the small bowel, colon, rectum and anus. A woman may be referred to a colorectal surgeon for the treatment of anorectal conditions, including haemorrhoids, fissures, abscesses and fistulas, and pelvic floor disorders, including bowel prolapse or functional bowel problems such as constipation and incontinence.

### Peer Support Service

A peer support service such as BTA's Facebook Support Group or P2P Support Service can provide a safe space to share your concerns and receive nonjudgmental support from others who have been on a similar journey.

### Perinatal Psychologist

Psychologists provide specialist psycho-social assessment and treatment of birth trauma, including talk therapy to assist in the processing of the trauma. They may use techniques specific to trauma/fear/anxiety/PTSD to address and help relieve the psychological symptoms that can accompany birth trauma.

### Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists carry out psychiatric assessments and administer medications to help relieve the psychological symptoms that can accompany birth trauma, including PTSD. They also work to support a secure attachment between the woman and her infant.

### Social Worker

The main role of a social worker is to advocate on behalf of the woman or family. They may do this by assisting them with accessing services, facilitating group or individual therapeutic intervention, and addressing external factors impacting the woman's wellbeing.

### Accredited Mental Health Social Workers

Accredited Mental Health Social Workers are highly trained and educated mental health professionals, meeting some of the highest standards of professional regulation in Australia. AMHSWs are one of the few designated allied health professional groups eligible to provide private mental health services to people with diagnosable mental health conditions or people 'at risk' of developing mental health conditions under the Commonwealth Medicare initiative. With a Mental Health Treatment Plan you can access 10 Medicare Rebated appointments with an AMHSW.

### Mental Health Nurse

Mental health nurses are nurses who have undertaken further training to care for people with mental health conditions. They may form part of a perinatal mental health service within a hospital or private practice. Mental health nurses can provide you with information about mental health conditions and support your treatment and recovery by collaborating with your GP, psychiatrist or other health professionals.

### Child Health Nurse

A child health nurse focuses on the health and well-being of mother and baby, including the baby's weight and "thriving." They will also focus on adequate nutrition for mother and baby and psycho-social assessments to monitor a mother's mental health. A child health nurse will refer the mother to mental health providers where necessary.

There is comfort in knowing you are not alone.

Information shared is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between you and your health professional/s. To find more resources, support and guidance visit our website.