



## The mental and psychological effects on trauma on children

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Emotional or psychological trauma result in a person feeling terrified, helpless, unprepared or alone. It is important to determine whether an event is a traumatic experience.

It is not the objective facts that determine whether an event is a traumatic experience, but the subjective, emotional experience.

Children who have been injured in an accident, or who have faced a trauma can suffer varying degrees of mental and psychological distress. It is therefore important that their needs are recognised and supported. Some people can suffer physical trauma with no psychological consequences. However, others may be profoundly affected by a relatively minor accident, witnessing an accident, having surgery or even coming into hospital.

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### Possible reactions to trauma on children and young people

- f* Flashbacks and intrusive thoughts. Self-consciousness and embarrassment (physical evidence of trauma). Regression for example, needing a dummy again and bed wetting if previously dry.
- f* Physical problems - changes in appetite, skin problems, sickness, headaches and general aches and pains.
- f* Emotional reactions – fear, sadness, attention-seeking, guilt, shame, tearful, clingy, demanding attention and mood swings.
- f* General reactions – resistance to authority and change in attitudes to life, obsessive thoughts, recklessness, increased competitiveness, general withdrawal.
- f* Concentration difficulties, confusion, refusal to go to school.



## References

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Early Childhood Trauma – [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org) accessed 06/08/2014

Emotional and Psychological Trauma – [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org) accessed 06/08/2014.

## Further information

Contact: Rebecca Taylor on [rebeccataylor6@nhs.net](mailto:rebeccataylor6@nhs.net) or 07789 941180.

### PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email: [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple. Alternatively, it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

## Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of the ward staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

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