

# **WHAT IS A BIRTH INJURY AND HOW DO YOU RECOGNIZE ONE?**

# WHAT IS A BIRTH INJURY?

A birth injury is an injury a baby suffers before, during, or immediately after birth.

Some birth injuries are minor and will heal on their own within a few days or weeks.

However, others can be serious and cause permanent damage, including brain damage and nerve damage, or even death.





## WHAT CAUSES BIRTH INJURIES?

**Birth injuries can be caused by a variety of issues, including:**

- Failure to diagnose and treat complications during pregnancy
- Failure to diagnose or a delay in treating complications during labor, including excessive bleeding or abnormal heartbeat of the baby
- Failure to or delay in ordering a C-section when vaginal delivery is too dangerous (i.e., the baby is too large, the baby is positioned abnormally, the umbilical cord is tangled, etc.)
- Improper use of labor induction drugs, such as Pitocin or Cytotec
- Improper use of delivery instruments such as forceps or vacuum extractors

# WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD SUFFERED A BIRTH INJURY?

**Get your child medical care right away.**

If possible, keep track of all bills and evidence related to the injury.

If your baby was injured because of negligence on the part of a doctor, nurse, or midwife, they can be held accountable for your baby's medical expenses and your family's pain and suffering.

It's important to speak to a birth injury lawyer about getting the compensation your child will need, especially if they suffered a disabling injury.





## COMMON INJURIES THAT MAY NOT REQUIRE TREATMENT

- **Swelling or bruising of the head**
  - This can occur naturally as the baby travels through the birth canal, and it often heals on its own without treatment.
- **A raised lump on the baby's head or bleeding from the scalp**
  - This may indicate bleeding between the skull and skin caused by delivery tools. Although it sounds serious, it does not cause brain damage and often heals on its own. However, it should be monitored closely.
- **Burst blood vessels in the eyes**
  - This injury often heals on its own without treatment.

**If you have concerns about any symptoms, make sure to mention them to your pediatrician.**

# POTENTIALLY SERIOUS INJURIES AND COMPLICATIONS

- **Broken Bones**

- Collarbone and limb fractures are common birth injuries. Look for your baby failing to move their limb or a lump forming on the affected area within 10 days of birth, as those symptoms could indicate a fracture.

- **Partial facial paralysis**

- Watch your baby's face as he or she cries. If half their face does not move, or one eye does not close, they may have suffered damage to the facial nerve from delivery tools.

If the nerve is bruised, it will typically heal on its own without treatment. But if the nerve is torn, **it may require surgery**. See a doctor for a diagnosis.



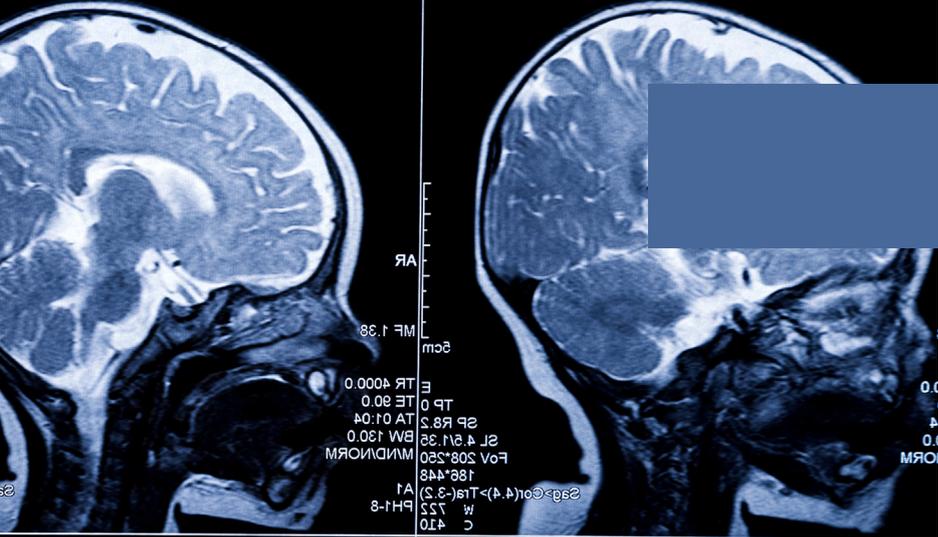


## POTENTIALLY SERIOUS INJURIES AND COMPLICATIONS

- **Weakness in the arms**
  - If a baby's shoulder or neck is pulled too forcefully during delivery, it can damage the brachial plexus, a set of nerves that control the arms.

If your baby does not move one arm as much as the other, they may have suffered damage to this nerve.

If the nerve is bruised, it will typically heal on its own without treatment. But if the nerve is torn, it may require surgery, physical therapy, or cause permanent weakness or even paralysis. See a doctor for a diagnosis of **Erb's palsy**.



# POTENTIALLY SERIOUS INJURIES AND COMPLICATIONS

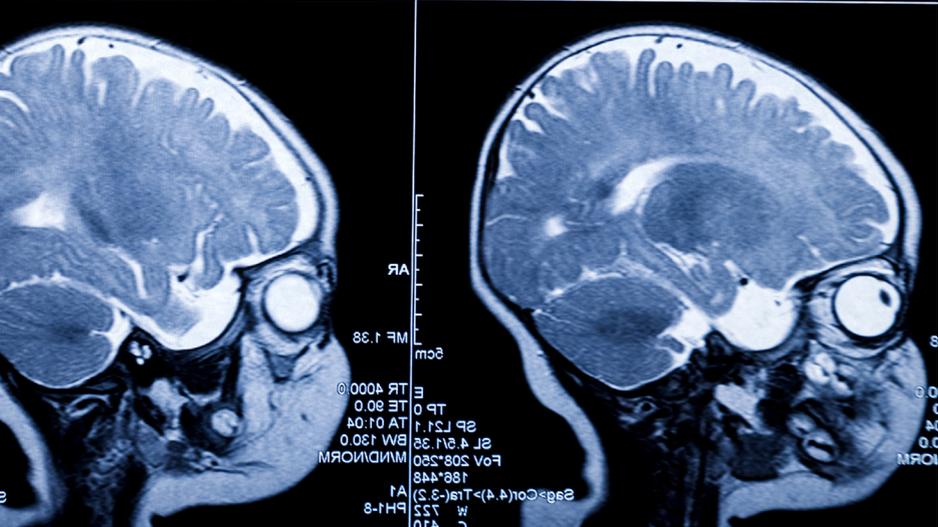
**Shoulder Dystocia:** A complication during labor and delivery when the baby's shoulders become stuck.

**Maternal injuries include:**

- Hemorrhage
- Tearing of the uterus, vagina, cervix, or rectum

**Infant injuries include:**

- Arm and collarbone fractures
- Nerve damage
- Brain damage
- Death



# SERIOUS INJURIES

**Infant Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy (HIE):** Brain damage caused by reduced oxygen flow to the brain just before or after delivery.

**Symptoms in infants include:**

- Slow heart rate
- Poor muscle tone
- Weak breathing
- Bluish or pale skin color

**Symptoms in toddlers and children include:**

- Neurodevelopment delays
- Motor skill developmental delays
- Cognitive issues
- Epilepsy





## SERIOUS INJURIES

**Periventricular leukomalacia (PVL):** Brain damage caused by untreated infection in the uterus, amniotic fluid, umbilical cord, or other kinds of infection. This type of birth injury is most common in premature babies.

### **Symptoms in infants include:**

- Slow heart rate
- Apnea
- Involuntary flexing of the legs

### **Symptoms in toddlers and children include:**

- Intellectual and cognitive impairment
- Vision and hearing problems
- Problems with coordination

# SERIOUS INJURIES

**Kernicterus:** Brain damage caused by failure to diagnose or treat jaundice in newborns.

## Symptoms in infants include:

- Yellowing of the skin
- Difficulty feeding
- Difficulty sleeping or waking
- Uncontrollable crying
- Fever
- Limpness or stiffness of the body

## Symptoms in toddlers and children include:

- Muscle spasms or involuntary writhing of the limbs
- Seizures
- Abnormal motor development
- Hearing problems or other sensory problems
- Inability to gaze upward
- Stained teeth





## SERIOUS INJURIES

**Cerebral palsy:** Damage to the part of the brain that controls movement. It is often caused by preventable birth injuries and medical malpractice. There is no cure, but treatment may lessen symptoms.

### **Symptoms in infants include:**

- Low muscle tone – baby feels “floppy” when picked up
- Muscle spasms or overly stiff muscles
- Inability to raise head and/or delayed milestones including inability to roll over or crawl
- Favoring one side of the body
- Difficulty feeding

### **Symptoms in toddlers and children include:**

- Uncontrollable movements
- Lack of balance and coordination
- Seizures
- Difficulty speaking, hearing, or seeing
- Learning disabilities

# BIRTH INJURY EXPENSES

Many symptoms of serious birth injuries are **not obvious until months or even years later**. However, the costs of caring for a child with a birth injury are often more than the average family can afford, and may include:

- Medical expenses
- Physical therapy
- Disability accommodation
- Special education expenses
- Occupational therapy
- In-home care
- Other costs





Often a lawsuit is the only way to get the money you need. Talk to a birth injury lawyer at **Parrish DeVaughn Injury Lawyers** today to learn how we hold negligent medical workers accountable for the harm they cause.