

Hormones of Labor & Birth



Hormones play an integral role in labor and birth. The levels of these hormones impact your contraction pattern and strength, pain levels, feelings, and state of mind. Learn to work with your hormone helpers to make birth easier, faster, calmer, and safer.

Let's meet your hormone friends!

Oxytocin

The Queen of labor hormones, Oxytocin is the hormone of love and bonding. She's there when you make the baby and she's the one who makes the uterus contract. That's right: you need copious amounts of love hormone to get the baby out. The same energy that gets the baby in, gets the baby out.

Try calm, quiet, loving environments, kissing, and upright positions to keep pressure of the cervix— one of her 'on' buttons.

She's shy, though, and won't be in her full power when you feel observed, scared, or negative. She also prevents excessive postpartum bleeding by closing the uterine wound, so keep up those warm, loving feelings. Skin-to-skin with baby helps, too!

The euphoric **birth high** that people report is an especially strong cocktail of Oxytocin, Endorphins, and Catecholamines.



Prolactin

Prolactin is the mama bear hormone. She brings the milk and puts baby's needs first, but is prone to anxiety. Prolactin needs her friend Oxytocin around to temper the constant vigilance that can feel overwhelming. Together, Oxytocin and Prolactin make the ideal parent cocktail. When partners spend time looking at, caring for, and skin-to-skin with the baby, they, too, will get hormones that make it easier to be a parent.



Endorphins

Beta-endorphin is a natural, pain killing opiate your body makes to help you deal with intense situations. She's the reason you can transcend the situation or go to 'laborland.' She and Oxytocin also team up to make you fall in love with your baby. She works with her little troop of lesser endorphins, Alpha, Gamma, and Signa.

Catecholamines



Catecholamines ("cat-e-KOHL-a-meens") are the fight or flight hormones. Normal labor stress is beneficial because it calls Catecholamines out to give you energy + regulate your blood sugar. But, if they get too worked up, they have been known to upstage Oxytocin and slow labor. If you don't get enough signals of safety while you're laboring, these hormones will come out and slow or stop the labor. Catecholamines also burst onto the scene to help the final efforts that push the baby out.