

The Hormones of Labour and Birth

Factsheet

You might have heard talk about the ‘hormones’ of pregnancy and birth, but what exactly are these and how you can use them? We have created this factsheet to give you some ideas of what to look for. If you still have any further questions, do email us at EBBSinfo@gmail.com.



What hormones support labour and birth?

Oxytocin:

- Responsible for contractions (helping you move the baby out)
- Enables bonding with baby
- Creates a happy, euphoric state
- Increases trust
- Helps when birthing the placenta (which happens after you birth the baby)
- Responsible for the ‘milk ejection reflex’ – which is how breastfeeding starts.

Endorphins:

- Provide natural pain relief
- Give a calming feeling
- Boost mood
- Reduce stress

What are the optimum conditions to produce these hormones?

- Quiet (silence when possible, only being asked questions if really necessary)
- Feeling safe, private and not observed (this is not necessarily the time for a photo op!)
- Low lighting
- Warmth
- Gentle touch from birth partner or midwife
- Comforting smells (i.e aromatherapy as opposed to hospital smells)
- Well hydrated and fed
- Being in a calm environment

The hormones of Labour and Birth

What hormones have a negative impact on labour and birth, and how can you reduce them?

Adrenaline:

- Adrenaline can block the production of Oxytocin & Endorphins
- It increases heart rate, blood pressure & respiration
- It diverts blood from reproductive organs to muscles (for 'fight or flight')
- It increases bleeding
- It reduces blood flow to the baby
- It makes labour more painful
- It causes contraction to stop, slow or become erratic

Adrenaline is increased by:

- Anxiety
- Embarrassment
- Interruptions
- Hostile, unsafe, unwelcoming environment
- Feeling observed
- Having strangers in your space
- Loud noises
- Smells with negative association
- Cold
- Hunger

If you have any further questions do get in touch or visit our website – <http://www.edinburghbirthandbaby.com>

