

Pain in Labor: Your Hormones Are Your Helpers

Written by Sarah J. Buckley, MD

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Imagine this. Your cat is pregnant, due to give birth around the same time as you are. You have your bags packed for the hospital and are awaiting the first signs of labor with excitement and a little nervousness.

Meanwhile, your cat has been hunting for an out-of-the-way place – your sock drawer or laundry basket – where she is unlikely to be disturbed. When you notice, you open the wardrobe door, but she moves again.

Intrigued, you notice that your observation, even your presence, seems to disturb the whole process. And, wish as you might to get a glimpse into the mysteries of birth before it is your

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Even hunger, which also causes the body to release fight-or-flight hormones, can stop labor

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fear or danger to speed up the birth, so that a mother can gather up her newborn baby and run for safety.

The new mother's CA levels drop quickly after the birth, which can make her feel cold or shaky. fe
keep her CA levels low and allow oxytocin to work effectively to prevent bleeding.

Prolactin is the major hormone of breast milk synthesis, and levels are increased at the end of fe
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our instincts. As part of the hormonal cocktail after birth, beta-endorphins play a role in bonding fe
Endorphins are actually present in breast milk, which explains the natural high that babies can fe

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remember the oxytocin and endorphins, which you also carry with you, and with your next relaxed breath, you breathe out fear and tension. You've packed your new nursing bra, and you know that prolactin will come to your aid as well.

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attach to her nipples, and as you catch her eye, she winks at you.

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