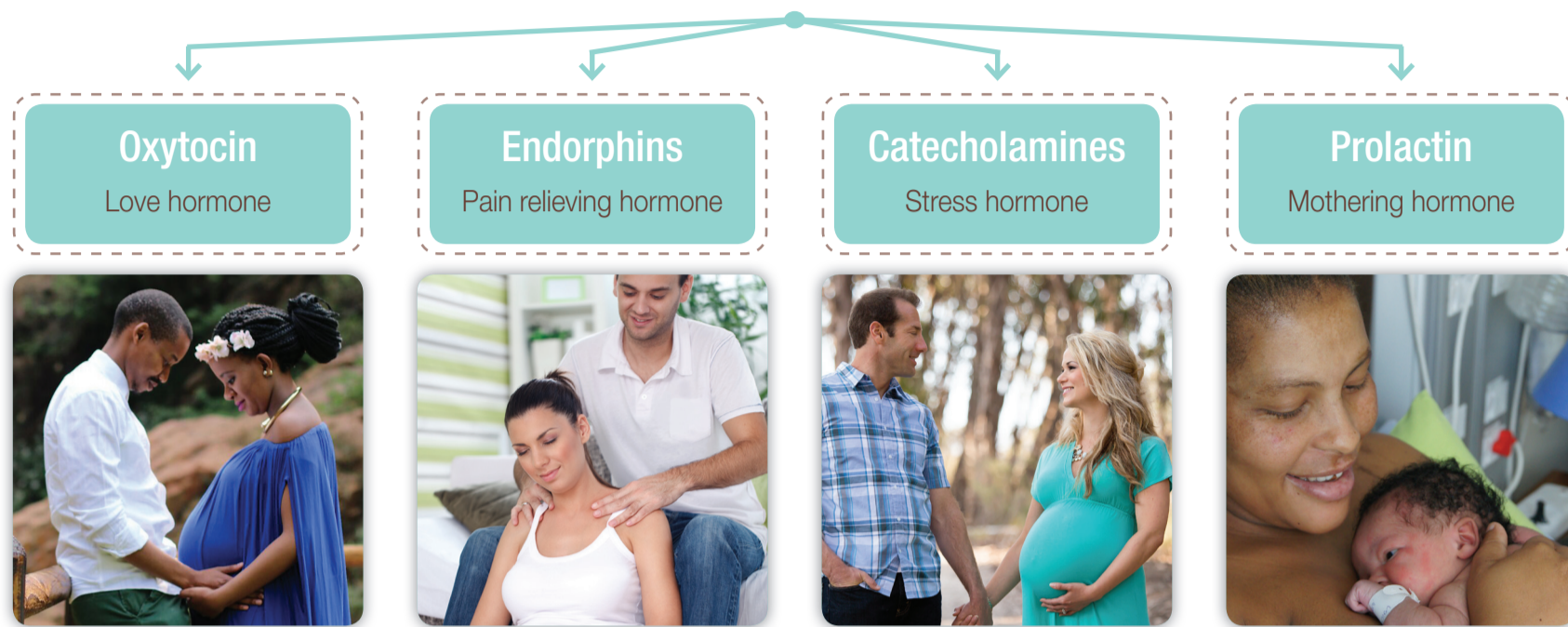


# The Perfect Dance of Birth Hormones

Perfect synchronicity in step, in harmony



↑ increases ↓ decreases → leads to

## Pregnancy

- Choose a kind, caring healthcare professional → eases your concerns, answers your questions, increases your confidence in your ability to grow a baby and give birth, gives support and encouragement → ↓ stress levels, ↓ catecholamines
- Attend childbirth education classes → increase your knowledge, ↓ your fear → ↓ catecholamines
- Exercise during pregnancy → ↑ endorphins
- High stress levels in pregnancy → ↑ catecholamines → poor birth outcomes

## Labour

- Allow labour to start naturally → ↑ oxytocin + prostaglandins → contractions of labour, ↑ endorphins – pain relieving pathway, ↑ oxytocin – prepares for breastfeeding + biological bonding, ↑ catecholamines – foetal lung maturity + maturity of other organs to give optimal transition from foetus to newborn baby
- Emotional support + encouragement (doula/labour companion) + calm, low stress environment → ↓ catecholamines, ↑ oxytocin, ↑ endorphins → ↓ chance of needing an epidural → ↑ chance of vaginal birth → ↑ breastfeeding success
- ↑ oxytocin – calms mother + makes her more connected
- Eustress (healthy stress) → ↑ mothers alertness + keeps her focussed, protects foetus against hypoxia (low oxygen levels), promotes newborn transition, newborn born wide-eyed, alert → ↑ breastfeeding + bonding
- Use non-pharmacological pain relieving options like water, positions, relaxation, visualisation, massage → ↑ endorphins → ↓ pain, ↑ reward and pleasure after birth
- ↑ labour pain → ↑ endorphins – natural pain relief + ↑ pleasure after birth → better birth memories

## Late Labour

- ↑ oxytocin peaks → ↑ pushing ability
- ↑ stress → ↑ catecholamines → ↓ blood flow to uterus + baby → Labour stops
- Epidural → ↓ maternal oxytocin → ↓ contractions + ↓ endorphins → ↑ Pitocin → ↓ oxytocin receptors desensitises → ↓ pushing efforts + ↑ risk of postpartum bleeding + ↓ effect on breastfeeding
- Epidural → ↓ prolactin → less successful breastfeeding

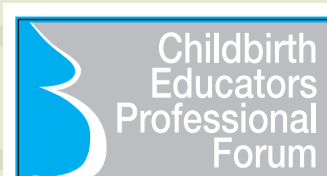
## Skin to skin

- Mom + baby skin to skin immediately after birth + uninterrupted → ↑ moms oxytocin + ↑ baby oxytocin → breastfeeding success + maternal-infant bonding + ↓ risk of postpartum bleeding
- Skin to skin → ↑ prolactin → ↑ breastfeeding success
- ↑ sensitivity for mom + baby → ↑ breastfeeding success + baby oxytocin ↑ with skin to skin → baby being in calm alert state → ↑ breastfeeding success
- Baby touching the mothers skin → ↑ oxytocin → ↑ breastfeeding + bonding
- Skin to skin → ↓ baby catecholamines → stabilises heart rate + breathing
- Skin to skin → ↑ oxytocin → ↑ blood flow to moms chest which warms baby
- Long term skin to skin → ↑ oxytocin + prolactin → ↑ moms mental health → ↓ stress
- Separation of mom and baby → ↓ oxytocin → ↓ breastfeeding + ↓ bonding

## Breastfeeding

- Baby oxytocin + prolactin in breast milk → baby that is calm + connecting effects ↑ between mom and baby

Find a childbirth educator in your area  
[www.expectantmothersguide.co.za](http://www.expectantmothersguide.co.za)



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