Pathway to a healthy birth

Our birthing hormones are made up of

1. Oxytocin – the Love hormone
2. Endorphins – the pain relieving hormones
3. Catecholamines – the stress hormones – fight or flight
4. Prolactin – the mothering hormone

1. During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a time to plan for a safe, smooth childbirth

Low levels of stress hormones help you and your baby stay healthy

What will help you stay on the pathway?

Choose the care provider and birth place that supports your body's abilities while avoiding unneeded tests and treatments

Find a doula to help you stay calm while you give birth

Limit stress during pregnancy when possible

What can pull you away from the pathway?

Choosing the care provider and birth place that intervene in natural processes when you and your baby are healthy

Not having skilled personalised support while giving birth

Feeling stressed during pregnancy

2. Late pregnancy

Hormones prepare you for safe and smooth childbirth, breastfeeding and bonding

What will help you stay on the pathway?

Let labour begin on its own when possible

What can pull you away from the pathway?

Inducing labour (or having a caesar) before your body is ready to give birth and your baby is ready to be born

3. Early labour

Hormones prepare you for a smooth labour and birth

Hormones help avoid unneeded interventions and side effects

What will help you stay on the pathway?

Stay home until labour is strong (active labour) while staying in touch with your care provider. Stay calm and relaxed

Get support from a doula

What can pull you away from the pathway?

Going to the hospital too early before labour is strong (active labour)

Feeling stressed and anxious

4. Active labour

Hormones prepare you for a safe birth and the time after birth

Hormones help avoid unneeded interventions and side effects

What will help you stay on the pathway?

Use comfort measures such as baths, showers and birth balls

Stay upright and move around for good labour progress, be patient during labour

Stay calm and relaxed

What can pull you away from the pathway?

Getting an epidural may slow your labour and make pushing difficult

Getting synthetic oxytocin to strengthen your labour can interfere with your body's hormones

Feeling stressed and anxious

5. Early hours and first days after birth

Hormones help you and your baby feel calm, connected and ready to breastfeed

What will help you stay on the pathway?

Stay in skin to skin contact with your baby in the hours after birth

Let your baby go through the 9 instinctive stages – latch and breastfeed when your baby is ready

Limit distractions, stay calm, and focus on being with your baby in the days after birth

What can pull you away from the pathway?

Being separated from your baby after birth

Not breastfeeding shortly after birth and when your baby is interested in feeding

Being distracted with other people and activities in the days after birth

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