The Perfect Dance of Birth Hormones

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Lynne Bluff, national co-ordinator of the *Childbirth Educators' Professional Forum*, explains how antenatal classes can help facilitate an understanding of the interplay of hormones before, after and during birth.

"Our hormone system prepares us in the final weeks, days and hours for an efficient labour; they help manage the pain and stress and ensure a safe birth. Hormones also give us a feeling of intense reward and pleasure as we meet our baby for the first time. For all this to happen in harmony, the birthing hormones need to work together in perfect synchronicity. At childbirth education classes, parents learn these intricate steps. The knowledge and understanding they gain helps facilitate the 'dance' for a better birth experience."

"Four hormones star in the show - oxytocin, endorphins, catecholamines and prolactin. Each brings its own style to the dance of labour. Oxytocin takes the lead, guiding you with love and connection, while catecholamines excite and energize you. Endorphins help you navigate through the daring twists and turns and nurturing prolactin will be there at the dazzling finish to welcome your baby."

"There is sound evidence that childbirth education builds confidence, reduces fear and connects pregnant parents with one another for mutual support." says Lauren Macnab of Bio-Oil, official partner for *Pregnancy Education Week*. "There are many benefits for expectant parents and the newborn child."

To find a childbirth educator in your area go to www.expectantmothersguide.co.za.

six good reasons to attend childbirth education classes:

Expertise – educators are experienced nursing sisters and midwives who have chosen to specialise in childbirth education because they passionately believe in it.
Knowledge – you learn about ALL the childbirth options available to you, and the pros and cons of each.
Tools – you'll be given practical tips and techniques - such as breathing, relaxation, positions, massage and visualisation - that can help you have an easier birth.
Confidence – you and your partner will feel more confident knowing what to expect and how to manage it.
Be prepared – you'll be taught about all aspects of pregnancy and birth, from stretch marks to caring for your newborn.
Connections – you'll meet other expectant parents from your area. Lifelong friendships can be formed.

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