

Childbirth Chatter



IN THIS ISSUE ...

Forming a Secure Attachment with Your Baby • Understanding 'Stalled' Labour • We Love Oxytocin

www.ceadarwin.asn.au

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Childbirth Education Association Darwin

Childbirth Education Association Darwin

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knowledge • confidence • choice

A Message From The Committee

We wish you well wherever you are on your parenting journey.

Parenting is one of the most important—and often most demanding—roles a person can take on. It can push every button you have, yet it also offers one of the greatest opportunities for personal growth. Despite its significance, parenting is not always valued by society in the way it deserves.

Please remember that everyone at CEA is here to support you in any way we can. We encourage you to reach out at any time - never hesitate. We have a wide range of resources available and can connect you with support for many different challenges. You don't have to navigate this journey alone. Community organisations like ours exist to stand beside you, especially when you may be far from family and friends.



The 2025 CEA Committee

2026 CEA Committee

Jacqui Cleghorn
Juliet Barsden
Kim Pemberton
Ros Consoli
Karen Curr

CEA Staff

Office Administrator:
Kim Pemberton

Birth Class Educators:
Midwife Cass McMahon
Midwife Jill Betheras

Yoga Instructor:
Emily Hallarth

Nurturing Newborns Facilitator:
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Thank you to Kat McNamara
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Birth Preparation Courses

January 2026

Wednesdays 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th
6:00pm to 8:30pm/9pm on the final week

February 2026

Mondays 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd
Wednesdays 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th
6pm to 8:30pm/9pm on the final week

March 2026

Mondays 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th
Wednesdays 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th
6pm to 8:30pm/9pm on the final week

Private courses are also available if these don't suit your schedule.

Early Parenting

January 2026

Wednesday 28th 6:00pm to 9:00pm

February 2026

Monday 23rd or Wednesday 25th
6pm to 9pm

March 2026

Monday 30th or Wednesday 25th
6pm to 9:00pm

All classes held at the Nightcliff
Community Centre

Birth Preparation Course Outline

Session One: Pregnancy & Creating Your 'Mindset' For Labour & Birth

Welcome

Pregnancy - nutrition, self care, building your support group for early parenting
Birth Planning - a useful birth plan is not your ideal birth written down on paper
Informed Choice
Thinking about Pregnancy & Birth - not an illness or 'risk' but a normal healthy life event

Cultural Ideas Around Pregnancy & Birth - how this influences us

Fear Release Work

HypnoBirthing Explained

The Hormones of Labour

Rebozo for Pregnancy

Why Normal Birth is Important

The Importance of Your Due Date

Role of Your Birth Support Person

Roles of Care Providers - OB's, Midwives, Doulas

How/Why Does Labour Start? Physical/

Emotional/Spiritual

Question Time

Session Two: Labour

Recap of Week One

Relaxation Meditation Practice

Induction - your choices around this, why, when, where, what to expect

The Cascade of Intervention

Hormones & Induction

Why Your Birth Environment Is Important

Creating Your Ideal Birth Environment

How Contractions Work

First Stage of Labour

Using Natural Birth Tools To Manage Labour

Active Birth Positions/Movement

Medical Pain Relief Options

Water

TENS Machine

'Birth Media' - every birth is unique

Question Time

Session Three: Birth

Recap of Week Two

BRAIN Decision Making Tool

Instrumental Birth

Gentle C-Section

Second Stage of Labour (Birth)

Directed Pushing vs Instinctive

Avoiding Tears

Post Partum Haemorrhage

Third Stage (Birthing Your Placenta)

The Importance of The First Hour After Birth

Session Four: Early Parenting

Workshop - The Fourth Trimester For Baby, Mother & Family (3 Hour Session)

What Babies Need -

Physical, Emotional & Developmental

Your Baby's Experience Of The Fourth Trimester

Baby-Wearing

Breastfeeding

Baby & Parent Sleep

Developmental Milestones

What New Mums Need

Understanding Hormones

Brain Changes

Traditional Postpartum Practices

Mum's Experience Of The Fourth Trimester

Physical Recovery from Birth

Partner's & Team Building

Maintaining Your Relationship

Question Time

Check our website for on-line booking forms... www.ceadarwin.asn.au or email the office ...

Birth Education Classes

Birth Preparation Classes are held over four weeks and encompass body, mind and spirit. Includes breastfeeding information.

Cost: \$260 for two participants

Private Birth Classes

You may prefer a more personalised course. Incorporating specific elements of our other courses or your own personal journey.

Private courses are able to fit yours schedule.

Cost: Dependent on time - \$80/hour

Early Parenting Workshops:

Designed to give parents-to-be knowledge and skills to enhance those first precious hours and weeks with your newborn. Topics include: normal infant behaviour, sleep and settling, breastfeeding, the infant microbiome, self care, team building for new parents and much more.

Cost: \$120 (includes partner or support person)

Please email the office for more details regarding any of these courses. info@ceadarwin.asn.au

Pregnancy Yoga Classes

Pregnancy Yoga: An antenatal yoga class with asanas appropriate for pregnancy. relaxation techniques, visualisation, pelvic floor exercises & strength work are included. The library will be open after the class. Classes are held Saturdays 11.30am - 12:45pm

Cost: \$17 or buy a 5 class pass for \$75.00

Classes held at the Nightcliff Community Centre
Boab Meeting Room

Nurturing Newborns Morning Teas

(Suitable for Babies from Newborn To Toddlers)

A chance to meet with other parents in a relaxed environment, have a cup of tea and share a delicious Petra's Raw Food Cake. Topics for each session are posted to facebook Please see the schedule later in this Newsletter.

Last Tuesday of every month 10am to noon
Nightcliff Community Centre
Cost: Free

CEA Library

Our library has an extensive collection of books, magazines, DVDs and CDs covering a wide range of subjects such as Pregnancy, Labour, Birth, Parenting, Vaccination, Exercise, Nutrition, VBAC, Waterbirth, Twins, Toddlers, Crying/Sleep, Special Needs Babies, Grief/Loss, Alternative Therapies, Fathers, Grandparents, Midwifery, Stories and more!

Building a Secure Attachment with Your Baby

Want to create a strong attachment with your newborn? These parenting tips can show you how to respond to your baby's cues and ensure they have the best possible foundation for life.

What is secure attachment?

Attachment or the attachment bond is the unique emotional relationship between your baby and you, their primary caretaker. It is a key factor in the way your infant's brain organizes itself and how your child develops socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. The quality of the attachment bond varies.

A secure attachment bond stems from the wordless emotional exchange that draws the two of you together, ensuring that your infant feels safe and calm enough to experience optimal development of their nervous system. Secure attachment provides your baby with the best foundation for life: an eagerness to learn, a healthy self-awareness, trust, and consideration for others.

An insecure attachment bond, one that fails to meet your infant's need for safety and understanding, can lead to confusion about their own identity and difficulties with learning and relating to others in later life.

Myths and Facts about Secure Attachment

Myth:

"My baby is attached to me because I gave birth to them."

Fact:

Infants have independent nervous systems that may be different from yours. What makes you feel good may not be the same thing that makes your infant feel good. So unless you look and listen to your infant's emotional cues, you won't understand his or her individual needs.

Myth:

"Secure attachment and love are the same thing."

Fact:

Bonding and attachment happen instinctively between mothers and babies, but, unfortunately, loving your baby doesn't automatically result in secure attachment. Secure attachment develops from your ability to manage your stress, respond to your baby's cues, and successfully soothe your infant.

Myth:

"I am having a hard time reading my baby's signs and I can't always figure out what he or she wants, so my baby must not be securely attached."

Fact:

It is not possible or necessary to understand your baby's emotional needs all the time in order to develop a secure attachment bond. As long as you recognize the disconnect and attempt a repair, the relationship will stay strong and may even grow stronger as a result of repairing the disconnect.

Myth:

"Always responding to their needs makes babies spoiled."

Fact:

On the contrary, the more responsive you are to an infant's needs, the less "spoiled" the baby will become as they get older. Bonding creates trust, and children with secure attachments tend to be more independent, not less.

Myth:

"Babies can have a secure attachment bond with more than one person."

Fact:

Babies form a secure attachment with only one person – the person who spends the most time caring for them. However, they can bond or connect in a loving way with all those people who take care of them.

Myth:

"Secure attachment is a one-way process that focuses on accurately reading my baby's cues."

Fact:

Attachment is a two-way, interactive process in which your baby reads your cues as you read theirs.

What is the secure attachment process?

The attachment process is interactive and dynamic. Both you and your baby participate in an exchange of nonverbal emotional cues that make your baby feel understood and safe. Even in the first days of life, your baby picks up on your emotional cues—your tone of voice, your gestures, and your emotions—and sends you signals by crying, cooing, mimicking facial expressions, and eventually smiling, laughing, pointing, and even yelling, too. In return, you watch and listen to your baby's cries and sounds, and respond to their cues, at the same time as you tend to their need for food, warmth, and affection. Secure attachment grows out of the success of this nonverbal communication process between you and your baby.

Why is secure attachment so important?

A secure attachment bond teaches your baby to trust you, to communicate their feelings to you, and eventually to trust others as well. As you and your baby connect with one another, your baby learns how to have a healthy sense of self and how to be in a loving, empathetic relationship.

Secure attachment causes the parts of your baby's brain responsible for social and emotional development, communication, and relationships to grow and develop in the best way possible. This relationship becomes the foundation of your child's ability to connect with others in a healthy way. Qualities that you may take for granted in adult relationships—like empathy, understanding, love, and the ability to be responsive to others—are first learned in infancy.



When babies develop a secure attachment bond, they are better able to:

- Develop fulfilling intimate relationships.
 - Maintain emotional balance.
 - Feel confident and good about themselves.
 - Enjoy being with others.
 - Rebound from disappointment and loss.
 - Share their feelings and seek support.
- A secure attachment bond is good for you, too

Nature has programmed mothers as well as their infants to have a “falling in love” experience through secure attachment. The joy you experience as you connect with your infant goes a long way to relieve fatigue from lack of sleep and the stress of learning how to care for your baby. The bonding process releases endorphins in your body that motivate you, give you energy, and make you feel happy. Creating a secure attachment with your infant may take a little effort, but the rewards are huge for both of you.

Parenting tips for creating secure attachment

Secure attachment doesn't happen overnight. It is an ongoing partnership between you and your baby. As time goes on, it will become easier to understand the cries, interpret the signals, and respond to your baby's needs for food, rest, love, and comfort—try to stay patient with yourself and your baby as you learn about each other.

Secure attachment starts with taking care of yourself

Babies communicate most effectively when they are in a quiet and alert state, and so do you. As hard as it may be, it is important to take care of yourself in order to build a secure attachment bond with your infant.

Try to get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation can make you cranky, listless, and irritable. Some parents have found it helpful to trade night duty (on for two nights, off for two nights), or to take at least one morning a week to sleep late.

Ask for support around the house. Especially in the newborn stages, get as much help as you can from your spouse, family, or friends.

Schedule some time away. Caring for a young infant is demanding, and taking some time away can help you parent more effectively. An hour in a coffee shop,

a walk, a yoga class, or doing something you want to do can provide some perspective and renewed energy.

Finding ways to calm yourself in stressful times

Since babies can't communicate verbally, they are especially attuned to signs of anxiety or stress. Babies need outside help to calm down. But an anxious caregiver can actually add to the baby's stress, making them harder to soothe. When you are feeling stressed, try to find ways to calm down before you interact with your baby.

Take a deep breath. This may mean letting your baby cry a minute longer so that you can take a deep breath before picking your baby up and trying to soothe them.

Team up. Don't think you have to do it all yourself. Try to enlist the help of your spouse, friends, family members, or a babysitter to help hold or care for your baby during fussy times of the day.

Take a walk. Fresh air and a change of scenery can work wonders for you and your baby. During particularly stressful times, try making a change in environment and see if it helps you and your baby calm down.

Creating secure attachment tip 1: Learn to understand your baby's unique cues

As parents of multiple children know, there is no one simple formula for meeting a baby's needs. From birth, each baby has a unique personality and preferences. Each baby's nervous system is unique as well. Some babies might be soothed by noise and activity whereas others might prefer calm and quiet. The key is to learn your baby's cues and respond to them accordingly.

Even though all of the sounds and cries may sound the same at first, your baby is communicating with you in different ways, using sound and movement. An arched back, a scrunched-up face, eyes tightly closed, fists curled up, rubbing eyes, hyperactive or frenetic movement—all of these signs communicate something specific about your baby's emotional and physical state. Your task is to become a “sensory detective” and find out what your baby is communicating and how best to respond.

Watch your baby's facial expressions and body movements for clues about their sensory needs. For example, your baby may adjust their body position or change their facial expression, or move their arms and legs in response to your voice, to indicate that they're cold or need to be held and cuddled.

Become familiar with the kinds of sounds your baby makes and what these sounds mean. For example, the "I'm hungry" sound may be a short, low-pitched cry, while the "I'm tired" sound may be a choppy wail.

Note the kind of touch your baby enjoys and the amount of pressure that they experience as pleasurable. With almost every touch your newborn is learning about life. The more tender your touch, the more your baby will find the world a comforting place.

Pay attention to the kinds of movements, sounds, and environments your baby enjoys. Some babies are comforted by motion, such as rocking or being walked back and forth, while others respond to sounds like soft music, or a change of environment such as being carried outside.

Sometimes babies will fuss no matter what you do, as when teething, sick, or undergoing a big developmental change. When this happens, keep up your efforts to communicate with and soothe your baby. Your patience, love, and care benefit your baby even if they continue to fuss.

Watch out for peer pressure from well-meaning family and friends. What worked for their baby may not work for yours. By learning what it takes to calm and soothe your baby, you initiate trust, and your baby begins the process of learning how to self soothe.

Tip 2: Eating, sleeping and opportunities for secure attachment

Many of your baby's early signs and signals are about the need for food and proper rest. Increasing the frequency of feedings or adding in some extra time for rest where appropriate can make a big difference in your baby's ability to engage and interact when awake.

Without proper rest, a baby cannot be calm and alert and ready to engage with you. Babies sleep a lot (often 16-18 hours a day in the first few months), and their sleep signals will come more often than you might expect. Often, babies who are overtired can act hyper-alert and move frenetically. You might mistake this energy for an invitation to engage, but really, it is your baby's way of saying that naptime should have been 30 minutes ago.

Hunger will also be the cause of many early cues from your baby. Schedules are helpful, but growth spurts and developmental changes may cause your baby's needs to change every few weeks so it is helpful to pay close attention to their unique signs and signals.

Tip 3: Talk, laugh, and play with your infant

The importance of having fun, playing with, holding, and sharing happiness with your baby cannot be overstated. Smiles, laughter, touch, and interaction are as important to a baby's development as food or sleep. Your body language, tone of voice, and loving touch are all important ways of communicating with your baby.

Tip 4: Secure attachment doesn't require you to be the "perfect" parent



You don't have to be a perfect parent all of the time in order to bond with your baby. Just do your best, and don't worry if you don't always know what your baby wants. What makes attachment secure, rather than insecure, is the quality and responsiveness of the interaction with your baby and a willingness to notice and repair a missed signal.

You need to understand your baby's cues half of the time, not every time

You don't have to be perfect to have a secure attachment with your infant. As long as you notice when you have missed your infant's cue and continue trying to figure out what your baby needs, the secure attachment process stays on track. In fact, the process of realizing there's a disconnect between you and attempting to repair it may even strengthen the relationship you have with your infant.

Parenting is frequently touted as the hardest job you will ever do. It is amazing how one tiny being can require so much work. But no one is able to be fully present and attentive to an infant 24 hours a day. Every parent needs help and support in order to stay relaxed, calm, and engaged.

Tip 5: Don't overlook dads in the process of secure attachment

In households where the mother is the breadwinner and dad stays at home, it is equally important for the father—as the infant's primary caretaker—to connect emotionally with his baby. The kind of multitasking required to care for a baby while simultaneously interconnecting emotionally with the infant can be harder for fathers (information travels more easily across the part of the brain known as the corpus callosum in women, making multitasking of this nature easier). However, with a little more effort, dads can still achieve the same results.

Dads, as the primary caretakers of their baby, can share activities that include:

Bottle feeding. As a dad, you can form a special bond with your infant when handling feedings and diaper changes by looking into baby's eyes, smiling, and talking.

Talking, reading, or singing to your baby. Even though your baby doesn't understand what you're saying, hearing your calm, reassuring voice conveys safety.

Playing peek-a-boo and mirroring your baby's movements.

Mimicking your baby's cooing and other vocalizations.

Holding and touching your baby as much as possible.

You can keep baby close by using a front baby carrier, pouch, or sling during daily activities.

Letting baby feel the different textures of your face.

Challenges to creating secure attachment with your baby

Ideally, a secure attachment bond develops without a hitch. But if either you or your baby is dealing with a problem that interferes with your ability to relax and focus on one another, a secure attachment bond can be delayed or interrupted.

Challenges in babies that can affect secure attachment:

Most babies are born ready to connect to their caregivers, but sometimes babies have problems that get in the way of secure attachment. These include:

Babies with compromised nervous systems.

Babies who experienced problems in the womb or in delivery.

Babies with health problems at birth or at a very early age.

Premature babies who spent time in intensive care.

Babies who were separated from their primary caretakers at birth.

Babies who have experienced a series of caretakers.

The sooner more challenging problems are identified, the easier they are to correct. For help, you can turn to your pediatrician, an infant mental health specialist, or someone trained in early intervention.

Challenges in parents that can affect secure attachment:

Parents who themselves did not experience a secure attachment bond when they were infants may have trouble emotionally connecting with their babies. Other challenges that can get in the way of your ability to bond with your baby include:

Depression, anxiety, or other emotional problems.

Drug or alcohol problems.

High levels of stress (from financial problems, lack of support, overwork, etc.).

An abusive, neglected, or chaotic childhood history.

Living in an unsafe environment.

Mainly negative memories of your own childhood experiences.

The Difference Between Bonding and a Secure Attachment Bond

Bonding:

Refers to your sense of connection to your child. It begins before birth and usually develops very quickly in the weeks after baby is born.

Secure Attachment Bond: Refers to your child's emotional connection with you that begins at birth and continues developing throughout life.

Bonding: Is task-oriented. You attend to your child's needs, whether it's changing diapers and feeding them, or taking them to soccer practice and the movies.

Secure Attachment Bond: Focuses on what is happening in the moment between you and your child. For example, your child's nonverbal cues tell you they're feeling unhappy and you show understanding and respond with a hug.

Bonding: You maintain your regular adult pace while attending to your child. For example, you hurry to feed your child dinner so you have time to watch your favorite TV show, or cut short playing a game to answer a text.

Secure Attachment Bond: You follow your child's slower pace and take the time to decipher and respond to their nonverbal cues that communicate, for example, "I'm in no hurry, I'm having fun just hanging out with you."

Bonding: You as the parent initiate interaction with your child. For example, you want to get a cute photo of your baby so you initiate play time, or you make your teen his favorite meal so he'll tell you how things are going at school.

Secure Attachment Bond: Your child initiates and ends the interaction between you. You pick up on your baby's nonverbal cues that they need to rest, so you postpone taking a photo. Or your teen's cues tell

you now is not a good time to talk so you postpone your questions.

Bonding: You focus on future goals by, for example, trying to do everything you can to have the smartest, healthiest child.

Secure Attachment Bond: You stay "in the moment." You listen, talk, or play with your child, giving them your full attention without distractions.

The confusion about bonding and the secure attachment bond

The words bond or bonding are commonly used to describe both caretaking and the emotional exchange that forms the attachment process, even though they are very different ways of connecting with your child.

One is a connection based on the care a parent provides for their infant child, while the other is based on the quality of nonverbal emotional communication that occurs between parent and child.

Both types of parent-child interaction can occur simultaneously. While feeding, bathing, or otherwise caring for your child, you can also build the emotional connection by recognizing and responding to your child's nonverbal cues.

Before experts understood the radical changes going on in the infant brain during the first months and years of life, both the caretaking process and the attachment process looked very similar. Now, though, they are able to recognize and painstakingly record an infant's nonverbal responses to highlight the process of attachment in infants.

By Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., Marti Glenn, Ph.D. and
Lawrence Robinson

<https://www.helpguide.org/family/parenting/building-a-secure-attachment-bond-with-your-baby>

Using a TENS Machine During Labour: How it Works and Why Timing Matters

When it comes to natural pain relief during labour, a TENS machine is one of the most underrated tools in the birth bag. TENS stands for Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation, and although it may sound a little clinical, it's actually a simple, safe, and effective option that many women find incredibly helpful during the early stages of labour.

Let's explore how it works, when to use it, what sets an obstetric TENS apart from a regular one – and why understanding how the brain processes pain makes all the difference.

How does a TENS machine work?

A TENS machine sends small, gentle electrical impulses through the skin via electrode pads, which are usually placed on the lower back. These impulses help reduce the experience of pain in two key ways:

1. Neurological distraction and brain modulation

Older theories like the “pain gate theory” which have now been debunked through extensive research, suggested that pain signals were transmitted from the body to the spinal cord and brain and could be blocked at the spinal level. However, modern pain science has shown that pain is not simply transmitted from the body – it is an output of the brain.

Dr David Butler, an Australian physiotherapist and founder of the Neuro Orthopaedic Institute Group (NOI Group), along with his long-time collaborator Professor Lorimer Moseley, has reshaped our understanding of pain. Their research shows that the brain decides whether something is painful based on a wide range of inputs – including physical sensations, context, memory, emotions, and perceived threat.

When you use a TENS machine, you're not blocking a pain signal – you're changing the conversation happening in your nervous system. The electrical input provides non-threatening

sensory information to the brain, helping it interpret the sensations of labour in a less alarming way. In short, it calms the nervous system and can reduce the intensity of how contractions are experienced.

2. Endorphin release

TENS also stimulates the release of endorphins – your body's own natural pain-relieving hormones. These hormones play a key role in helping you cope with labour sensations and create a sense of wellbeing. When the machine is used early and consistently, your endorphin levels can build steadily over time, offering even greater support through the intensity of active labour.

When should you start using the TENS machine?

Early labour is ideal. This is the stage when contractions are starting to become regular but are still relatively manageable. Applying the TENS machine at this stage gives your body and brain time to adjust to the stimulation and begin producing endorphins. It also supports the brain to maintain a calm, grounded state before labour intensifies.

Many women who wait until active labour to start using a TENS machine report that it feels less effective – likely because the brain is already interpreting the situation as a threat, and the nervous system is already ramped up.

It's important to note that TENS should be removed before entering water (such as a bath, birth pool or shower) and is typically discontinued if an epidural is used.

What's the difference between a general TENS and an obstetric TENS?

Not all TENS machines are created equal. While general-use machines are designed for treating musculoskeletal issues like back pain, obstetric TENS machines are specifically designed for childbirth.

Here's how they differ:

Boost button – Obstetric TENS units have a “boost” function you can press during a contraction to increase intensity, then turn off afterwards. This responsive feature is essential during labour.

Pre-set programs – designed specifically for labour rhythms, so there's no need to manually adjust settings.

Larger pads – designed to fit comfortably and effectively on the lower back.

Ease of use – labour-friendly designs with simple controls for adjusting intensity and boosting as needed – even between contractions.

Who can use a TENS machine during labour?

Most women can safely use a TENS machine during labour. However, it should not be used in water and should be avoided by those with a pacemaker or seizure disorders like epilepsy unless cleared by their healthcare provider.

It's a non-invasive, medication-free option that gives women control, promotes movement, and integrates beautifully into a physiological birth plan.

Extra reasons to love the TENS machine

You're in control – you get to decide when to start, stop, increase, or boost.

Portable – use it in early labour at home, in the car, or as you move around the hospital.

Side-effect free – completely safe for you and your baby, with no sedating effects or recovery time.

Encourages upright movement – upright movement and freedom to change positions are important for labour progress. The TENS complements this beautifully.

What does pain science teach us?

Dr David Butler, founder of the NOI Group, and Professor Lorimer Moseley have transformed how

we understand pain. Their book 'Explain Pain' and ongoing education at www.noigroup.com highlight that pain is not just about what's happening in the tissues – it's about how the brain interprets the entire situation.

Their work explains that context, fear, beliefs, and even language can impact how pain is experienced. In labour, this means that tools like the TENS machine – which offer safe, and non-threatening input to the brain – can help reduce the brain's perception of danger and decrease the intensity of pain experienced.

This is a powerful shift in understanding. It moves us away from simply trying to “block” pain and toward supporting the nervous system in a holistic, brain-aware way.

The TENS machine is a smart, evidence-based tool for labour that works in harmony with your body's natural rhythms. It helps recalibrate how your brain processes sensations, supports endorphin production, and gives you a sense of control – all without interfering with your body or your baby.

It's an excellent addition to your birth toolkit – empowering you to work with your body, your brain, and your baby during one of the most important, yet intense experiences of your life.

Some extra online resources to help you understand how pain works are listed below:

TEDxAdelaide – Lorimer Moseley – Why Things Hurt

The Drug Cabinet in the Brain

Treating Pain Using the Brain – David Butler

A 'science' experiment with a fake hand

Article by Vicki Hobbs , Doula





The Darwin Homebirth Group is a collective of parents who share the philosophy that pregnancy, labor and birth are normal, natural family centered events.

Our members are passionate about women having real and informed choices in regards to where, with whom and how they birth. This way women can feel supported, safe, empowered and in control of their birth experience.

The fully funded Government Homebirth Service gives women the opportunity to have a known, qualified and experienced midwife care for them at home before and after the birth.

Darwin Homebirth Group is volunteer run and not-for-profit. We offer:

- Monthly morning or afternoon teas
- Access to our library with information on pregnancy, natural birth, water immersion, home birth, breast-feeding and gentle parenting
- Biannual newsletters rich with birth stories, birthing and parenting information
- Ongoing contact with homebirth midwives
- Access to birthing aides and equipment
- Meal provisions for new parents
- Advocating for improved birth choices and women centered care



Darwin Homebirth Group
dhhginfo@gmail.com
0438 868 755

www.darwinhomebirthgroup.wordpress.com



darwin
homebirth
group

birth choices matter

Find us on



Nurturing Newborns Monthly Morning Teas

Last Tuesday of Every Month 10.00am – Noon
Nightcliff Community Centre Meeting Room
Refreshments Provided From Petra's Raw Cakes
Free of Charge

CEA is facilitating a welcoming and relaxed
monthly gathering for pregnant people
& parents of babies from birth to eighteen months.

Older siblings welcome.

2026	Topic
Tuesday 27th January	Elimination Communication - Nappy Free Toileting for Infants
Tuesday 24th February	Soothing, Settling and Sleep Through the First Year of Life
Tuesday 31st March	Baby-Wearing - Includes Demonstrations of Different Carriers
Tuesday 28th April	Baby-Led Weaning
Tuesday 26th May	Travelling With Your Baby
Tuesday 30th June	Gymbaroo - How to Enjoy Tummy Time
Tuesday 28th July	Soothing, Settling and Sleep Through the First Year of Life
Tuesday 25th August	Baby-Wearing- Includes Demonstrations of Different Carriers
Tuesday 29th September	Parenting Like a Cave Woman - Tips Your Baby Wants You to Know
Tuesday 27th October	Baby-Led Weaning
Tuesday 24th November	Travelling With Your Baby



Please Wait For Me

A Poem About Motherhood & Life

I am a baby not ready to be born
I can't breathe
Please wait for me

I'm running behind, I can't keep up
My legs won't move as fast as you
I'm swimming towards you, you are my safety net
Please wait for me

I am a genius, don't rush me
I'm contemplating my next move
I'm playing chess, I'm inventing the wheel, I'm deep
in thought, let me finish reading this sentence, or
write this paragraph
Please wait for me

You say you love me but
I'm not ready yet
Please wait for me

I am a woman in labour
Believe in me
Hold the drugs, hold the scissors
Baby will come
Please wait for me
Just wait

I just need a moment, please pause the movie
I need to go to the toilet, do the laundry, settle my
baby, have a stretch, switch off, make a cup of tea,
have a bite to eat, have a shower
I might be a while actually
Please wait for me

Please pause this moment and make time stop
My children are growing up too fast
Please wait for me

I am growing old
You're racing ahead of me
Please wait for me

My beloved who has gone ahead of me
I will join you soon
Please wait for me

They say the best things in life are worth waiting for
So please wait for me
Please just wait

By Juliet Barsden
Darwin Local, Meteorologist
& Mum of Two



Why Oxytocin Matters for Birth and Beyond

As you move closer to labour and the early days of parenting, you may find yourself learning about cervixes, contractions, due dates, and birth plans. Yet one of the most powerful influences on your birth experience is something you cannot see or schedule: a hormone called oxytocin.

Oxytocin is the hormone that drives labour, supports birth, and lays the foundation for bonding with your baby. It helps your uterus contract, guides your baby into the world, supports breastfeeding, and plays a central role in love, connection, and emotional wellbeing. Understanding oxytocin can help you make sense of how labour unfolds—and why the way you feel, the environment around you, and the support you receive matter so deeply.

Unlike hormones that respond best to control or effort, oxytocin flows most easily when you feel safe, supported, and unobserved. It is sensitive to fear, stress, bright lights, noise, and feeling rushed or judged. This means that birth is not only a physical process, but also an emotional and social one. The more protected and calm you feel, the more effectively your body can do what it already knows how to do.

Oxytocin does not just shape birth; it carries forward into early parenting. The same hormone that supports labour also supports bonding, breastfeeding, and emotional connection with your baby. By learning how oxytocin works before labour begins, you give yourself tools not only for birth, but for the transition into parenthood.

Supporting Oxytocin During Labour and Birth

While labour cannot be controlled, oxytocin can be supported and protected. Many simple, instinctive practices help encourage its flow during labour and birth, including:

1. Feeling safe and supported by people you trust (ideally your birth support person should be your rock, your anchor - a person you feel safe having in your close physical space and their touch helps you relax)
2. Privacy, with minimal interruptions

3. Dim lighting and a calm environment
4. Gentle, reassuring touch such as massage or holding hands
5. Warmth, including showers, baths, or warm blankets
6. Freedom to move, sway, or change positions
7. Quiet voices and encouragement, rather than instruction or urgency

These are not “extras” or luxuries—they are biological supports that help your body release the hormones needed for labour to progress and for you to cope with its intensity.

Understanding oxytocin helps shift the focus from “managing” labour to supporting the conditions that allow birth to unfold. It invites you to trust your body, honour your instincts, and recognise that how you feel during birth matters—not just emotionally, but hormonally.

As you read this article, you are not being asked to memorise science hoping to achieve a “perfect” birth. Instead, you are being offered knowledge that can help you feel more confident, more prepared, and more supported as you step into one of the most powerful transitions of your life.

Oxytocin: The Hormone That Shapes Birth, Bonding and Human Connection

Oxytocin is often called the “love hormone” or “bonding hormone,” but these popular labels barely capture its extraordinary complexity and importance. Oxytocin plays a central role in childbirth and breastfeeding, influences emotional bonding and trust, supports stress regulation, and affects how humans connect with one another across the lifespan. It is both a hormone and a neurotransmitter, acting in the body and the brain, and its effects are shaped not only by biology but also by environment, relationships, and emotional safety.

Cont/...

Understanding oxytocin offers profound insights into how birth unfolds, how babies and parents bond, and how care, touch, and connection support human health. In recent decades, research into oxytocin has transformed approaches to maternity care, mental health, and social wellbeing, highlighting the importance of physiological processes that thrive best under conditions of calm, safety, and support.

What Is Oxytocin?

Oxytocin is a peptide hormone produced primarily in the hypothalamus, a small but crucial region at the base of the brain. From there, it is released by the posterior pituitary gland into the bloodstream, where it acts on organs throughout the body. Oxytocin is also released directly into the brain, where it functions as a neurotransmitter, influencing emotions, behavior, and social interactions.

Unlike many hormones that operate through linear cause-and-effect pathways, oxytocin works in feedback loops. This means that its release often increases in response to the very behaviors or sensations it promotes—such as uterine contractions, skin-to-skin contact, breastfeeding, and emotional closeness. This self-reinforcing quality makes oxytocin especially powerful during childbirth and early parenting.

Oxytocin and Pregnancy

During pregnancy, oxytocin levels gradually rise, preparing the body for labour and birth. Oxytocin receptors—the sites on cells where oxytocin exerts its effects—increase significantly in the uterus, particularly toward the end of pregnancy. This receptor growth ensures that when labour begins, the uterus is highly responsive to oxytocin's signals.

Oxytocin also plays a role in:

Supporting emotional bonding between parents and their unborn baby

Promoting calmness and emotional regulation

Enhancing sensitivity to social cues and relationships pregnancy—such as feeling supported, safe, and connected—may influence oxytocin pathways and shape how labour unfolds.

Oxytocin and Labour: The Hormone of Birth

Oxytocin is the primary hormone of labour. It stimulates the rhythmic uterine contractions that gradually open the cervix and move the baby down through the birth canal. These contractions occur in waves, with oxytocin released in pulses that grow stronger and more frequent as labour progresses.

The Oxytocin Feedback Loop

One of oxytocin's most remarkable features is its positive feedback mechanism:

Uterine contractions stimulate oxytocin release

Oxytocin intensifies contractions

Stronger contractions trigger even more oxytocin

This loop continues until birth occurs.

Environmental Influences on Oxytocin

Oxytocin release is highly sensitive to the environment. Conditions that support oxytocin include:

Feeling safe and unobserved

Dim lighting

Calm voices and reassuring touch

Privacy and emotional support

Conversely, stress, fear, bright lights, loud noises, and a sense of being watched or judged can inhibit oxytocin release. Stress hormones such as adrenaline can counteract oxytocin, slowing labour or making contractions less effective.

This sensitivity explains why many people experience more efficient labours when they feel supported and secure, and why unnecessary interruptions or fear-inducing environments can interfere with labour progress.

Oxytocin, Pain, and Altered States of Consciousness

Oxytocin does not eliminate pain, but it plays an important role in pain modulation during labour. It interacts with endorphins—natural pain-relieving chemicals—helping many birthing people enter a focused, inward, altered state of consciousness often described as “labour land.”



Birth Pool & TENs Machine Hire

Benefits of Hiring a Birth Pool for Your Homebirth

Hiring a birth pool offers an affordable, convenient way to experience the calming benefits of water during labour. Warm water can help reduce pain, support natural movement, and promote relaxation, making it easier for your body to progress through labour. Renting a birth pool also gives you access to high-quality equipment without the cost or storage needs of buying your own. With professional guidance, easy setup, and flexible home use, a hired birth pool creates a comfortable, private environment that supports a positive and empowering birth experience. If you're planning a homebirth or exploring gentle birthing options, hiring a birth pool is a practical and cost-effective choice.

Benefits of Hiring a TENs Machine for Labour

Hiring a TENS machine for labour is a cost-effective, drug-free way to manage pain and stay in control during childbirth. TENS machines use gentle electrical pulses to reduce discomfort, release endorphins, and help you stay calm and focused through each contraction. By hiring a TENS machine, you gain access to trusted, birth-specific equipment without the upfront cost of buying your own. Portable, easy to use, and safe for home or hospital births, a hired TENS machine gives you flexible, on-demand pain relief from early labour onward. For parents seeking natural pain management options, TENS machine hire is a practical, affordable, and highly effective choice.

When: Pick up your equipment at 37 weeks and return it once your baby is born

Where: Pick up is from the CEA office at the Nightcliff Community Centre, 18 Bauhinia St

Cost: Birth Pools cost \$155 including all pumps hoses etc and a single use liner for your personal use

TENs Machines cost \$70 including four sterile gel pads for your personal use

Other details: Please email dhbginfo@gmail.com to book your equipment

This state can:

Reduce perception of pain

Increase tolerance for intense sensations

Promote instinctive movement and vocalisation

Oxytocin also encourages surrender and trust in the process of birth, supporting a physiological rather than purely cognitive response to labour.

Oxytocin After Birth: Bonding and Attachment

Immediately after birth, oxytocin levels surge in both the birthing parent and the baby. This post-birth oxytocin peak supports bonding, attachment, and emotional connection, laying the foundation for early parent-infant relationships.

Skin-to-Skin Contact

Skin-to-skin contact is one of the most powerful stimulators of oxytocin release. When a newborn is placed on a parent's bare chest:

Oxytocin levels rise in both parent and baby

The baby's breathing, heart rate, and temperature stabilise

Stress hormones decrease

Early feeding behaviors are supported

This shared oxytocin release helps imprint familiarity, safety, and trust between parent and baby.

Emotional Bonding

Oxytocin enhances:

Feelings of love, protectiveness, and affection

Recognition of familiar faces, voices, and smells
Emotional attunement between parent and child

Importantly, bonding is not limited to one parent. Oxytocin rises in non-birthing parents as well, particularly through touch, caregiving, eye contact, and responsive interaction.

Oxytocin and Breastfeeding

Oxytocin is essential for breastfeeding. While prolactin is responsible for milk production, oxytocin controls the milk ejection reflex, often called "let-down." When a baby suckles, oxytocin causes the muscles around the milk-producing glands to contract, releasing milk into the ducts.

Oxytocin during breastfeeding also:

Promotes relaxation and calm

Supports bonding and emotional closeness

Helps the uterus contract and return to its pre-pregnancy size

Reduces postpartum bleeding

Stress, anxiety, or pain can inhibit oxytocin release, which is why emotional support and comfort are so important in the early breastfeeding period.

Synthetic Oxytocin: Medical Use and Considerations

In maternity care, synthetic oxytocin (commonly known as Pitocin or Syntocinon) is often used to induce or augment labour, or to manage postpartum bleeding. While synthetic oxytocin can be lifesaving when medically indicated, it does not cross the blood-brain barrier in the same way as natural oxytocin.

This means that synthetic oxytocin:

Stimulates uterine contractions

Does not trigger the same emotional, calming, or bonding effects in the brain

Can produce stronger, more frequent contractions without the natural ebb and flow

For this reason, labours involving synthetic oxytocin may feel more intense and may require additional pain management. Understanding the differences between natural and synthetic oxytocin helps individuals make informed decisions about their care.

Oxytocin Beyond Birth: Social Connection and Mental Health

Oxytocin continues to shape human behavior well beyond the perinatal period. It plays a role in:

Trust and cooperation

Empathy and emotional recognition

Social bonding and pair attachment

Stress regulation and anxiety reduction

Oxytocin interacts with the nervous system to help shift the body from a fight-or-flight state into a rest-and-connect state. This makes it especially important for mental health and emotional resilience.

Research suggests that disruptions in oxytocin pathways may be associated with conditions such as:

Postnatal depression and anxiety

Trauma-related disorders

Difficulties with bonding or social connection

However, oxytocin is not a “cure-all.” Its effects depend heavily on context, personal history, and environment. In some situations, oxytocin can intensify emotional sensitivity, making supportive surroundings even more important.

How Oxytocin Is Naturally Supported

Oxytocin release is encouraged by everyday human experiences that foster safety, connection, and pleasure. These include:

Touch, hugs, and affectionate contact

Eye contact and warm facial expressions

Supportive relationships

Feeling heard and understood

Gentle movement and rhythmic activities

Calm, familiar environments

During pregnancy, birth, and early parenting, consciously protecting these conditions can help support the body’s natural hormonal processes.

Rethinking Oxytocin: More Than a “Love Hormone”

While oxytocin is often portrayed in simplistic terms, it is not merely a feel-good chemical. It is a sophisticated hormone that helps humans navigate vulnerability, dependence, and connection. Oxytocin does not remove challenges or pain, but it helps make them bearable and meaningful by anchoring them in relationship and trust.

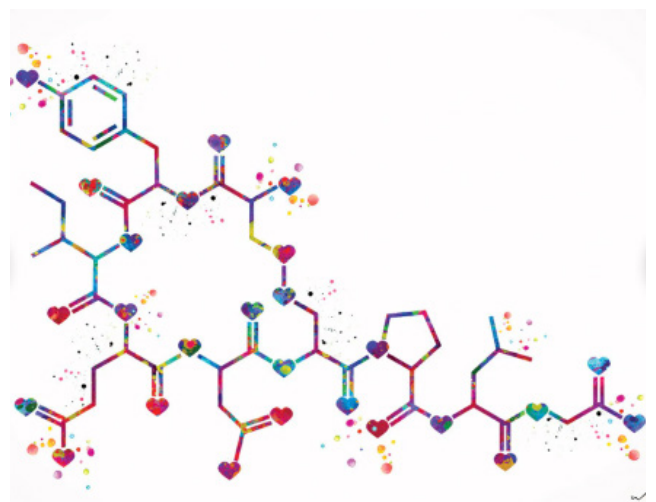
In childbirth, oxytocin reminds us that birth is not only a physical event, but also a deeply emotional and social one. In parenting, it reinforces the importance of presence, responsiveness, and care. In wider society, it highlights how profoundly human wellbeing depends on connection.

Conclusion

Oxytocin is at the heart of some of the most significant moments in human life—from birth and breastfeeding to love, trust, and belonging. It is shaped by biology, influenced by environment, and strengthened through connection. By understanding oxytocin, we gain insight not only into how bodies function, but into how humans thrive.

Supporting oxytocin means supporting calm, safety, respect, and relationship. Whether in maternity care, families, or communities, creating environments that allow oxytocin to flow is a powerful way to promote health, resilience, and humanity.

Article by Kim Pemberton
Using chatgpt



Understanding The Concept of a ‘Stalled’ Labour

As you prepare for birth, you may hear many new terms that can sound worrying. One of them is “stalled labour”(sometimes called prolonged labour or failure to progress). While the name can sound alarming, stalled labour is fairly common, often temporary, and very manageable with the right care and support.

Understanding what stalled labour is – and what your care team can do about it – can help you feel more confident and prepared if it happens to you.

What Is Labour Supposed to Do?

Labour happens in stages, and while every woman's experience is different, the overall goal is the same:

The cervix opens (dilates)

The baby moves down through the pelvis

The baby is born

Labour is usually divided into:

Early labour – contractions begin and the cervix starts to soften and open

Active labour – contractions become stronger and closer together, and the cervix opens more quickly

Pushing (second stage) – baby moves down and is born

A labour is considered to be progressing when the cervix continues to open and the baby continues to move down over time.

What Is a Stalled Labour?

A stalled labour means that labour has slowed down or stopped progressing for a period of time.

This can happen in different ways:

The cervix stops dilating

Contractions weaken or become irregular

The baby stops moving further down the birth canal

It's important to know that labour is not a straight line. Many women experience pauses or slow periods – and not all slow labour is a problem.

When Is Labour Considered “Stalled”?

Care providers usually look at:

How dilated your cervix is

How strong and regular contractions are

How long it's been since progress last happened

How you and your baby are coping

A stall might be considered if:

The cervix doesn't change for several hours during active labour

Pushing doesn't lead to the baby moving down after a long period

Contractions are not strong enough to continue progress

Importantly, decisions are made based on the whole picture, not just the clock.

Why Does Labour Stall?

There are many possible reasons, and it's no one's fault.

1. The Power (Contractions)

Sometimes contractions:

Aren't strong enough

Aren't frequent enough

Lose momentum after a long labour

This is especially common if you are very tired or dehydrated.

2. The Baby

Labour may slow if:

Baby is in a less ideal position (such as facing upward)

Baby's head isn't fitting easily through the pelvis yet

Babies often rotate and adjust during labour, and this can take time.

3. The Pelvis and Soft Tissues

Everyone's pelvis is shaped differently. Sometimes:

Muscles need time to relax

Swelling can slow progress

4. Exhaustion or Stress

Labour is hard work. Fear, tension, or exhaustion can:

Increase adrenaline

Reduce oxytocin (the hormone that drives labour)

Feeling safe, supported, and rested can make a big difference.

Is a Stalled Labour Dangerous?

Most of the time, no — especially when monitored carefully.

Your care team will watch:

Your baby's heart rate

Your contraction pattern

Signs of infection or distress

If you and your baby are doing well, there is often time

to try gentle, supportive measures first.

What Can Be Done to Help Labour Restart?

There are many options, and they are usually tried step by step, starting with the least invasive.

1. Changing Positions

Movement can help baby shift and labour progress:

Walking

Squatting

Hands-and-knees position

Side-lying with a peanut ball

Sometimes one position change is all it takes.

2. Rest and Hydration

If you're exhausted:

A nap

Fluids

A light snack (if allowed)

can help your body regain strength.

3. Emotional Support

Feeling calm and supported matters. This may include:

Reassurance from your partner or midwife

Lower lighting

Fewer people in the room

Relaxation or breathing techniques

4. Breaking the Waters (Amniotomy)

If your waters haven't broken, your provider may suggest breaking them to:

Increase pressure on the cervix

Strengthen contractions

This is usually discussed carefully, as it can make contractions stronger.

Remember that once your waters are broken your baby becomes vulnerable to bacterial infection. If labour does not resume a c-section will be recommended. You won't be able to return home or to the ward to rest and wait for labour to start again naturally.

5. Medication to Strengthen Contractions

If contractions remain weak, a medication such as oxytocin may be offered through an IV to:

Make contractions stronger and more regular

Help labour continue

This is common and closely monitored.

What If Pushing Is Stalled?

If pushing goes on for a long time, options may include:

Changing pushing positions

Resting and "laboring down" (waiting for stronger urges)

Assisted birth (vacuum or forceps) if appropriate

Cesarean birth if needed for safety

Your care team will explain the reasons and help you understand your choices.

Does a Stalled Labour Mean a Cesarean?

Not necessarily.

Many stalled labours:

Restart on their own

Progress with support or medication

Still end in vaginal birth

However, if labour does not progress and there are concerns about you or your baby, a cesarean may be offered.

A cesarean in this situation is not a failure — it is a medical response to keep you and your baby well.

How Can You Prepare Ahead of Time?

While you can't control everything about labour, you can:

Learn about labour positions

Stay active during pregnancy if able

Practice relaxation and breathing techniques

Discuss preferences with your care provider

Build a supportive birth team

Being informed gives you confidence — not control — and that confidence matters.

A Final Reassuring Thought

Many experienced midwives recommend sleep as the best remedy for a stalled labour. Remember ... your care providers can assess what might be causing the stalled labour and let you know ...you can then decide what your preferred path of action or non-action might be.

Labour is a journey — sometimes slow, sometimes unpredictable — but with support, patience, and care, women go on to have safe births and healthy babies.

Written by Kim Pemberton
Using Chat GPT





Childbirth Education Association
knowledge • confidence • choice

Pregnancy Yoga

CEA's Pregnancy Yoga is designed to help women prepare for a positive, confident birth.

Postures include abdominals, strength work, pelvic floor, hip openers, positive visualisation and relaxation for birth.



Cost Per Class	\$17
5 Class Pass	\$75
No need to book, please just come along.	

Venue:

Boab Meeting Room
Nightcliff Community Centre
Saturdays 11:30am – 12:45pm

<p>Childbirth Education Association Nightcliff Community Centre 6/18 Bauhinia Street, Nightcliff Office hours: Tues–Fri, 9am–12noon Tel: 08 8948 3043</p>	<p>www.ceadawin.asn.au info@ceadawin.asn.au Join us on Facebook: Childbirth Education Association Darwin</p>
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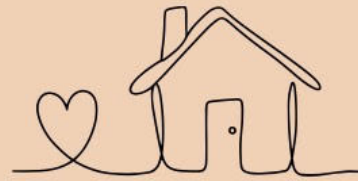
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