

# Surprise! Pitocin Is Linked to Postpartum Depression | Mother Rising

FEBRUARY 3, 2017 BY [LINDSEY MORROW](#)

Pitocin®, a synthetic form of oxytocin, is routinely given to women before, during and immediately following birth to induce and augment labor and to also prevent and treat postpartum hemorrhage. Much to the surprise of the medical community, [a recent study showed that Pitocin® is linked to postpartum depression](#) and anxiety.

The mothers aren't surprised.

## Surprise! Pitocin Is Linked to Postpartum Depression



For women with a history of depression or anxiety prior to pregnancy, receiving Pitocin® increased the risk of postpartum depression or anxiety by **36%**.

For women with no prior history of depression or anxiety, receiving Pitocin® increased their risk of postpartum depression or anxiety by **32%**.

Let that sink in for a moment.

## I Bet the Numbers Are Even Higher

While I pondered these incredibly high numbers, it occurred to me that the numbers may actually be higher.

The information used in the research study came from women that received a diagnosis and/or a psychotropic medication. What about those that didn't seek help?

In my experience, for whatever reason, many women do not seek professional help when experiencing postpartum anxiety and/or depression.

How many anxious or depressed mothers never confide to their care providers about what they're feeling? Or even worse, were dismissed and told "everything will be fine".

## It's Not Just in Our Heads

Even if the numbers may be higher, the research as is, is incredibly validating. Ladies, what you are feeling is not "just in your head". It's real, and it's a big problem (that society has no idea how to handle).

\*For a list of symptoms of postpartum mood disorders [please visit Postpartum Progress](#). (Postpartum Progress is a non-profit that aims to raise awareness, fight stigma and provide peer support and programming to women with maternal mental illness.)

## Pitocin Is Not the Same as Oxytocin

The strangest thing about the research study was that the hypothesis was the opposite of what made sense to me as a mother and childbirth educator. The hypothesis suggested that synthetic oxytocin, Pitocin, would in fact *lower postpartum depression and anxiety*.

The underlying assumption I am gathering is that, [despite the evidence](#), medical professionals believe that Pitocin® is the same as oxytocin.

A few years ago I was attending a Pitocin® induction at my local hospital. My doula client was struggling BIG TIME with the sudden wave after wave of strong, painful contractions. Her nurse, not knowing what else to do, told her, "this is just labor, honey". As if what she was experiencing were normal labor sensations. How sad.

Believe me, Pitocin® does not feel warm and fuzzy, and isn't "just like labor". [My pitocin augmentation birth was much harder than my first two births](#). For me, Pitocin®

made my active labor phase [feel like the transition phase](#), and lasted far longer than the [transition phases](#) I had experienced in my non-Pitocin® births.

## Oxytocin is Needed to Mother Well

Oxytocin, on the other hand, is helpful for coping with stress, supporting emotional and mental well-being and also helps with bonding – which are absolutely necessary for a successful transition to motherhood. ([source](#))

Another study showed that women given Pitocin in labor had low oxytocin levels during breastfeeding. This revealed that the exposure to Pitocin® has consequences that last on into mothering. ([source](#))



## What About the Baby?

If oxytocin is an important hormone for becoming a mother and synthetic oxytocin is linked to postpartum depression, anxiety and low oxytocin during breastfeeding. I can't help but wonder – what about the baby?

If oxytocin effects how women transform into mothers, how is this synthetic hormone affecting the baby?

How is the baby affected by synthetic oxytocin before, during and after labor?

Frighteningly, we have no idea.

## Re-Examine Routine Procedures

If Pitocin® is linked to postpartum depression and causes a lack of oxytocin during the postpartum period, maybe it's time to re-evaluate the use of Pitocin® as it pertains to each woman. (Never mind the baby...)

According to the CDC, induction has more than doubled from 1990 (10%) to 2010 (23%). ([source](#)) However, just because a procedure is routine does not mean that it's a good enough reason to do it.



## We Need More Research

I'm not suggesting to eliminate Pitocin®, as it is an important life saving tool in modern obstetrics. (Shoot, [I've even experienced it first hand!](#)) However, because the consequences of routine childbirth interventions such as Pitocin® on human maternal behavior have been understudied, it would be wise to limit the use of Pitocin® until further research is completed.

And if Pitocin® is deemed necessary, it would be wise and compassionate to provide quality postpartum care, especially to those with high risk factors for postpartum depression.

What if care providers were required to pay for 40 hours of postpartum doula services to women that received Pitocin®? I bet we'd quickly see the true motivations behind the choices made in the care of new mothers.

Oxytocin is essential for our species to thrive as mothers. Our current methods meddle with the mental health of these new mothers – the backbone of society.

Is the crumbling mental health of new mothers important enough for us to take action?

***The original article can be found here***

**<http://www.motherrisingbirth.com/2017/02/pitocin-is-linked-to-postpartum-depression.html>**

***Original research document can be found here***

**<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/da.22599/full#>**