

Calm Birth®

NEW POTENTIAL OF CHILDBIRTH

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Benefits of Childbirth Meditation

The biological and psychological benefits of meditation are imparted to a womb child through the pregnant woman's bloodstream and through sympathetic resonance. The same benefits may be imparted to the child after birth through lactation and breastfeeding and energetic resonance.

Psychological Benefits of Meditation

Murphy and Donovan (1999) describe extensive research in the psychological benefits of meditation including improved perceptual ability, reaction time and physical motor skill, concentration, empathy, creativity and self-actualization. Perceptual and cognitive abilities enhanced by meditation in a pregnant woman encourage the womb child, through sympathetic resonance, to develop these inherent traits.

Biological Benefits of Meditation

Anxiety and results in stress negatively impact our physical and psychological health. anxiety causes an overproduction of the hormones adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones suppress immune system function and other important biological functions by shifting energy into muscle systems for a “fight or flight” response. Extensive research has shown that hormonal imbalance is a primary factor in weakening health and causing various immune deficiency diseases. Meditation is a proven non-invasive antidote to biological and psychological problems caused by anxiety and stress. Research in the biological benefits of meditation is extensive.

The widespread chemical treatment of anxiety has resulted in additional biological and psychological problems. If a woman is pregnant, the treatment of anxiety with mood modulating chemicals can result in birth defects or other long-term health problems. Self-calming meditation has been shown to directly reduce adrenaline and cortisol secretion, naturally restoring hormonal balance and normalizing immune system function. Meditation directly benefits pregnancy and childbirth by restoring hormonal balance, enhancing the immune system, optimizing nervous system function and providing tools for pain management. In addition, meditation

produces elevated levels of hormones such as oxytocin, melatonin, DHEA, serotonin and endorphins, Powerful pain relieving, pleasure causing hormones.

Melatonin

Melatonin is a hormone synthesized and secreted by the pineal gland, a cone shaped endocrine gland located at the base of the brain. In various medical Traditions the pineal gland has been associated with light and optimal human health and development. The University of Massachusetts Medical Center Meditation / medicine program has published remarkable evidence of elevated levels of melatonin in the blood work of people participating in its program. Elevated levels of melatonin resulting from childbirth meditation imply benefits to pre and perinatal health that weren't for the research. Current worldwide interest in melatonin, evident in hundreds of research papers and books, focuses on its biological benefits and effects of the human immune system. Melatonin may be the most potent and versatile antioxidant. It directly stimulates interleukin (IL-2) activity, which in turn stimulates an increase in all the various cells of the immune system. Melatonin directly restores and increases T-helper cell production in bone marrow.

In these stress-inducing times, strong levels of melatonin in the bloodstream *naturally induced* by pregnant women through meditation, reflects effective prenatal care. Melatonin is renowned as a sleep aid. When produced naturally to elevated levels, it assures normal sleep and rest even in challenging situations. The practice of meditation has been proven to be superior to deep sleep in bringing about energy restoration and repair. Melatonin has a calming effect, improves mood and enhances contentment.

DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone)

DHEA, A life enhancing hormone, is produced in the adrenal glands. Elevated levels of DHEA were one of the first discovered biological benefits of meditation. The adrenal glands also produce the cortisol and adrenaline stress hormones. As DHEA levels rise, there is reduced production of the restrictive stress hormones. Like melatonin, DHEA has a variety of Health promoting benefits. As an immune enhancement agent, DHEA has been proven to be a benefit in the treatment and prevention of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and lupus. It stimulates production of monocytes (T cells and B cells) and potent immunological biochemicals that cause the production of other immune system agents. T cells

(white blood cells produced in the bone marrow) produced two powerful immune system agents: interleukin-2 and gamma-interferon, intelligent defense agents that help maintain health.

DHEA is good for the bones, muscles, blood pressure, vision and hearing. It is the substance from which the male and female hormones are developed and it is the source of vitality and youthfulness. DHEA is a mood elevator that makes people feel and look better. It enhances brain biochemistry and growth. Anxiety and stress lower normal DHEA levels and meditation elevates DHEA levels. During pregnancy, labor and birth, meditation offers potentially ideal hormonal function and conveys elevated levels of DHEA to the baby inside the womb and to the child after birth through breastfeeding.

Serotonin

Serotonin is a natural substance the body uses to make melatonin. It is a neurotransmitter produced in the brain and the gut that has a calming effect, associated with contentment. It also regulates blood vessel elasticity, helps repair muscle tissue damage and is generally beneficial in healing. Serotonin is produced in elevated levels during meditation practice. It is passed from woman to child along with melatonin and DHEA.

Endorphins

Endorphins are peptides secreted throughout the nervous system that have a very strong pain relieving and pleasure-inducing effect, similar to that of morphine. Meditation elevates endorphin levels, with important implications for natural childbirth. Michel Odent (1994, p. 15) observes the longer and more challenging the labor the higher the level of endorphins. The more time devoted to the practice of prenatal meditation, the higher the level of endorphins present during the labor process. Endorphin production is important to a laboring woman to avoid risk of medical interventions and gain confidence in her natural abilities and childbirth.

Deepak Chopra writes (1990 page 62), "Thus the brain and [nervous system in general] produces narcotics up to 200 times stronger than anything you can buy.. with the added boon that our own painkillers are non-addictive. Morphine and endorphins block Pain by filling a certain receptor on the neuron and preventing other chemicals that carry the message of pain from coming in, without which there can be no sensation of pain no matter how much physical provocation is present."

Candice Pert, PhD, author of *Molecules of Emotion: Why You Feel The Way YOU Feel*, (1997 page 167) writes about her third childbirth: “My magic bullet had been breathing, which is a surefire, proven strategy for releasing endorphins and quelling pain. Obviously, this is what previous generations of women, in the days before IV drips and synthetic painkillers had relied on. Both day and their babies must have been better off for the experience, as I certainly felt myself to be.”

Oxytocin

Oxytocin is a hormone and a neuropeptide which has both physiological and Behavioral effects. It is released from the hypothalamus into the bloodstream as a peptide hormone by the pituitary gland. The hypothalamus produces oxytocin as a signaling substance and delivers it to the nervous system through long nerve fibers to receptors in the brain. There are four major hormonal systems active during labor: oxytocin (hormone of love), endorphins (hormones of pleasure and transcendence), adrenaline and noradrenaline (hormones of excitement), and prolactin (mothering hormone).

For birth to proceed optimally, the middle brain must take precedence over the neocortex (forebrain/rational brain). Through meditation practice and with an atmosphere of quiet and privacy, this shift and consciousness from neocortex to the middle brain can be achieved.

Hormonal balance is essential for birth to proceed smoothly. Meditation restores hormonal balance, allowing estrogens to activate the oxytocin and prolactin receptors during labor, promoting maternal and infant release of endorphins during labor and birth, enhancing the adrenaline hormonal surge in mother and baby immediately before birth and facilitating the release of oxytocin and prolactin after birth. Oxytocin is an essential part of this complex hormonal balance. Previous opportunities to release high levels of oxytocin facilitate the development of a greater number of receptors during labor.

Oxytocin is involved in every aspect of sexual life; during intercourse, childbirth and lactation. Every facet of Love involves oxytocin. It induces maternal behavior in the hour following birth and enhances our capacity to love self and others. The capacity to love is determined to a great extent, by early experiences during fetal life and in the period surrounding birth.

Other Important Benefits of Childbirth Meditation

Another important benefit derived from meditation is increased tolerance of pain based on psychological factors. Extensive research conducted at the UMMC (Murphy and Donovan 1999 page 77 - 78), Demonstrated statistically significant reductions in the following: present moment pain, negative body image, inhibition of activity [natural movement potential], mood disturbances, anxiety, depression and the need for pain related drug utilization.

Additional observed benefits of meditation with significant implications for childbirth are: 1. Benson, 1996, noted cesarean section surgery reduced by 56% and epidural anesthesia use reduced by 85% among those practicing meditation; 2. Tsai, 1993, Found reduced to work stress levels and nurses after meditation training; 3. Astin, et al, 1987 concluded that mindfulness meditation may be an important cognitive coping strategy for transforming the ways in which we respond to life events.

A pregnant woman's meditation practice always has dual benefits. The woman communicates psychologically and energetically, influencing the child to produce beneficial neural hormones and neurotransmitters. She also communicates hormonal benefits through her bloodstream to her child.

The body will not work well if it is constantly overexerted and overstressed. Meditation is an opportunity to replenish the body stores, regain strength, rest and heal.

As we discover further dimensions of biological and psychological function and as mine/body methods become more of a part of childbirth medicine and the focus of research, we'll deepen our understanding of the potential of meditation in childbirth. Meditation methods specifically designed for childbirth may prove to have additional benefits Beyond those described here.

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