



The moody blues

The word “hormones” gets tossed around a lot during pregnancy, but what exactly is the reason behind the tears at the Kleenex commercial or the flash of anger you feel when your hubby brings home chocolate chip ice cream when you specifically asked for mint chocolate chip? **LISSA POIROT** investigates.

Jokes about hormonal women abound—think, most recently, of the movie *Knocked Up*—but they exist for good reason. Wild hormones are a way of life for mommies-to-be. Growing a baby requires our bodies to make some serious changes. Keeping your precious cargo safe and developing him into a healthy 9-pound being in 9 months is a full-time job, requiring the body to produce extra hormones to make all of these accommodations.

All good for baby; not so good for you, who gets to experience some serious mood swings, fatigue so severe you feel like you may fall asleep standing up and morning sickness that comes even in the middle of the

night and wakes you from an already fitful sleep, also courtesy of those hormones. Hormones can take you from fearful: “What have I done? I’m not ready to have a baby!” to elated: “We’re bringing life into this wonderful world!” to depressed: “I look like a whale, everyone thinks I’m fat and if I throw up one more time, I quit!” and back again, and again, and again.

So what’s causing this rollercoaster of emotions? Blame it on a host of hormones coursing through the body, some of which you’ve had in small doses before the pregnancy, and some only making an appearance during these special 9 months, give or take a few months postpartum. The biggest culprits:

COASTING ALONG

The mood swing rollercoaster is more of a pendulum, really, taking you for a spin during the first trimester, easing up during the second and kicking back into full gear in the final weeks. The good news is that by practicing a few coping techniques, the ride might be just a bit more enjoyable.

KEEP STRESS IN CHECK. If you’re already stressed, the added hormones can exasperate it, so find ways to destress, be it as simple as getting enough ZZZs, fitting in a walk around the park, putting your feet up more often or letting dad-to-be handle the household chores.

MAKE TIME FOR YOU.

Pregnant women get fawned all over—a great perk—but make sure you fit in time to celebrate you and not just your

upcoming debut as a mom. If movies are your passion, make sure you get to the theater. Love to read? Curl up with a good book—and *What to Expect When You’re Expecting* doesn’t count.



Estrogen. The same hormone that causes your mood swings once a month prior to pregnancy is a factor during pregnancy, as well. While it aids in the development of female sexual characteristics, extra estrogen increases blood flow, giving you that pregnancy glow. It’s also the reason your breasts may be sore and grow larger during pregnancy. (The upside of hormones!)

Progesterone. Progesterone is needed to thicken the lining of the uterus to become a soft place for a fertilized egg to grow, and its role in pregnancy is a good one—it helps prevent premature labor. However, it’s also the reason

you may experience heartburn and indigestion, and feel hot even when it’s freezing outside.

Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG). This special hormone is only produced during pregnancy, and the addition of this hormone not often found in the body is said to be the cause of the morning sickness many pregnant women experience. As the body gets used to the hormone, morning sickness begins to fade.

Human Placental Lactogen (HPL). An important addition to our bodies, this hormone helps stimulate milk glands for breastfeeding and plays a major role in fetal development. **P&N**