



THREE REASONS  
YOUR LIBIDO IS LOW  
WHILE BREASTFEEDING  
*and what you can do about it*

# STREAM

SCAR TISSUE REMEDIATION, EDUCATION, and MANAGEMENT

Did you know that 90% of people who give birth are left with scar tissue afterward? Scars may affect libido, especially when they make sex painful.

Hi! My name is Ellen Heed, and I connect the dots for people who have questions about how to handle their bodies, lives, and libido during the postpartum year. I also teach people to resolve these issues and remediate any scar tissue they have after giving birth. [Learn more about that here.](#) Here's one question that comes across my desk all the time:

**Q: My question is about libido, we are almost two years postpartum, and I have not started my period yet. I have very (very) low libido. I've been told to get bloodwork done. I know that many other factors dampen libido, like exhaustion and stress, not to mention that my breasts are buffeted daily by tiny fists.**

**We are co-sleeping and breastfeeding around the clock, so I know that has an effect, but is there something else I can do? I'm just wondering if you have any suggestions about what might be going on with me?**

**A: Before you get bloodwork done, consider this:**

Although it may not feel ideal, it's completely normal to have minimal access to your libido while breastfeeding. You're right, of course - stress plays a substantial role. But first, there are biochemical factors to consider. They get missed by so many people, yet once understood, they make total sense. Read on to learn how postpartum biochemistry interferes with your sex life and what you can do about it.

# CONSIDER THE HORMONE THAT MAKE BREASTFEEDING POSSIBLE

**PROLACTIN** is a hormone made by your body to crank up milk production. This hormone also prepares your brain for the repetitive tasks of parenting. AKA the “tenderness hormone,” prolactin promotes caregiving behaviors in mammals, including humans.

**But prolactin has side effects that affect your libido. Prolactin enables you to continue to make a healthy milk supply while suppressing sexual desire. How? Prolactin competes with estrogen for receptor sites on your cells. While you’re breastfeeding, you want prolactin to win.**

But what about estrogen? Estrogen and testosterone are essential to help us find our desire for sex. Their production naturally reduces while you are nursing, plus with prolactin circulating, these sex hormones find fewer available receptor sites. That means they can’t trigger as much desire for sexy adventures during the breastfeeding stage of parenting.

Nature designed us to stay focused on the project at hand, and because infants cannot fend for themselves for quite a while, prolactin keeps your eyes on the prize of infant care during the breastfeeding months. This natural reduction in sex hormones diminishes your libido.

Perhaps surprisingly, men’s bodies also produce prolactin. The research suggesting that prolactin is the “Roll over and start snoring hormone” after orgasm has been debunked. However, it is still associated with distancing behavior between mates after sex. Abnormally high levels of prolactin are associated with decreased sexual drive and anorgasmia. Take the dominance of prolactin in your hormonal landscape into consideration while asking why your libido is low when breastfeeding.

# CONSIDER THIS CHANGE OF ALLEGIANCE IN YOUR SECRET SAUCE OF DESIRE

**PHEROMONES** are the secret sauce of attraction between mates. Have you ever experienced feelings of sexual attraction to someone for no reason that you could understand? That could be due to the subtle influence of pheromones on the sex centers of your brain. So much so that you have an entire cranial nerve dedicated to their perception.

Virtually unknown until the 1980s, Cranial Nerve Zero, AKA the Terminal Nerve, was not investigated until a team of scientists dissected and described one in a pilot whale. They tracked the nerve into the sex centers of the whale's brain and discovered that it conducted messages received via pheromones. We have a Terminal Nerve too.

Our most ancient sensory abilities allow us to pick up something more subtle than scent. That thing is pheromonal information. You've probably heard that pheromonal information allows the menstrual cycles of women living together to sync up. That's because pheromones stimulate sexual behavior and even ovulation in animals, including us.

The power of pheromones is staggering though it goes unseen - it can even travel across species. I just heard a story from a woman whose 7-month-old-virgin puppy started lactating while she (the woman) was breastfeeding. The vet said the puppy had a false pregnancy. Is this pheromonal cross-talk between species at work?

**Here's the thing: your baby emits powerful pheromones, and so do you while breastfeeding. It's a two-way chemical conversation that ensures bonding but can undermine attraction to your partner. Why? Because nature wants you to prefer your baby's pheromones over those of your mate-while breastfeeding. The truth is your baby will seem much more appealing than your adult partner. This state of affairs is temporary - you'll get your pheromonal attraction to your partner working for you again once breastfeeding is complete.**

# SOMETIMES I LACTATE DURING SEX

## WHY? AND HOW IS THAT SEXY?

**OXYTOCIN** is a peptide that gets stimulated during intimacy. It has many jobs in the body; it's a big part of what triggers everything from bonding to orgasms to milk let-down.

**Really - there is nothing wrong with milk let-down during intimacy. It's a normal part of the breastfeeding experience, and your partner may just find that sexy. It means you are feeling the effects of breast stimulation, orgasm, and you're full of milk. It's either time to feed the baby, pump, or simply relax and let your nipples flow.**

Known as the cuddle hormone, getting oxytocin to flow by cuddling is a great way to de-stress from the rigors of sleepless nights so familiar to new parents. Oxytocin also plays a vital role in our stress responses, nervous system regulation, and behavior. It's an essential aspect of our mammalian heritage, reflected not only in human cuddling but the grooming behavior of cats, dogs, mice, and other mammals who care for their young (or others) within their social groups.

Dr. Sue Carter is a world expert on oxytocin. She discovered and described its role in attachment, cardiovascular, and immune regulation. She postulates that oxytocin can protect the body from the effects of trauma, including a traumatic birth experience.

Ironically, Pitocin is an artificial form of oxytocin given to induce labor. Labor induction may be necessary in some cases but can often start a cascade of events resulting in a traumatic experience for the birthing person. One way to come to terms with a traumatic birth is to tell your birth story to a present and sympathetic listener.

Look for someone who will not try to make you feel better by reminding you that you and your baby are OK now, so it was all for the best. This attitude disregards your experience and bypasses your need for an actual resolution of birth-related trauma. You can [find practitioners](#) who understand the power of birth stories here.

# LOW LIBIDO ISN'T FOREVER! ADAPT TO THE NEEDS OF YOUR POSTPARTUM BIOLOGY SO YOUR LIBIDO CAN RECOVER

One of the best ways to renew your libido is by making space for recreation labs with your partner - intentionally non-intentional dates without goals (like his orgasm or yours, which may not be available for now). Spend time together, so your body can become familiar with your partner's pheromones again (without immediate competition from your baby). It will undoubtedly help.

It's is a confusing time to be parenting - the constraints of covid have made travel and grand-parental care less available. Still, do what you can to find that private time with your partner. Although it may seem impossible, get creative - you will find your way.

Feeling like you owe your partner "mercy sex" can undoubtedly be stress-inducing. It's important to share the information you're reading right now with your partner so you can discuss what you've learned and how you're feeling about sex. There are so many ways to be intimate without actual sex.

**Cuddling is critical and an excellent way to stay connected. Find some time to lie on the couch with your partner, feet-to-feet. It counts. Taking some time away from your baby is crucial to re-establish your biochemical bond with your partner. Get a babysitter for an adults-only evening so that can happen.**

The good news? Your libido will return in time. Have patience—you just made a baby! Increase the speed of libidinal return by paying your body back. Babies aren't made out of plants but out of *your* protein, *your* fat, and minerals from *your* bones. So replenish that lost protein, lower your carb intake and increase healthy fats like ghee. Cholesterol is not the bad guy anymore; it's the foundational building block of your sex hormones. If you can tolerate it, get some clean dairy into your system to help promote estrogen production. Think of it this way: more butter can be good for your sex life! If you're still worried, [get in touch](#). I'll do my best to help.