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Sunnies aid with labour

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EXCLUSIVE

JACKIE SINNERTON

PREGNANT women are being urged to wear sunnies during their labour to help produce the hormone melatonin which boosts contractions.

In the last few weeks of pregnancy, the uterus develops receptors to melatonin and makes the uterus muscle more sensitive to the hormone. Combined with oxytocin it stimulates the uterus to start contracting.

Melatonin is also a natural sleep-regulating chemical that typically increases in the body after dark.

“This is why you will find most babies are born early in the morning after mum has laboured during the night. The amount of light that you are exposed to influences the creation of the hormone and hospitals have notoriously bright

lights,” midwife and sleep expert Amanda Bude said.

“The drive to hospital takes a woman out of her ‘nest’ and into an environment that can slow down and even stop the natural rhythm and secretion of the hormones oxytocin and melatonin.

“Medical procedures such as blood pressure and examinations can all slow down the body’s natural hormone. Wearing sunglasses can be an easy way of preventing artificial light on the retina.”

Australian researchers are trialling the use of melatonin pills to improve induced labour. The trial on 700 pregnant women is being run through the Hudson Institute of Medical Research and Monash Health.

“The hormone can be boosted in a natural way. I’d prefer that than popping a pill,” Ms Bude said.