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Sunglasses may help in labour

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

In the last weeks of pregnancy, the uterus develops receptors to melatonin. Combined with oxytocin, the hormone stimulates the uterus to start contracting. Melatonin is also a natural sleep regulating chemical that increases in the body after dark.

JACKIE SINNERTON

“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,” 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. “Wearing sunglasses can be an easy way of preventing artificial light on the retina,” Ms Bude said.

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