This Bliss Hormone Can Heal Your Body:  
The Many Benefits of Oxytocin  

A special chemical in your body, called oxytocin, helps to create the feeling of falling in love. Sometimes referred to as the hormone of “forgetting oneself,” oxytocin plays an important role in birth, lactation, bonding, and orgasm.

Oxytocin can act like a psychological buffer. Nature wired both men and women to experience an oxytocin surge (or several) during moments of bonding with each other or their children.

Oxytocin naturally enhances a sense of:

- Optimism
- Trust
- Mastery
- Self-esteem

**Oxytocin Benefits Other Systems in the Body**

During childbirth, both the fetus and the mother release oxytocin. Not only does oxytocin enhance the bonding experience, it also stimulates uterine contractions.

This is why synthetic oxytocin (also called Pitocin) is given during labor. It can promote delivery or speed up contractions. Unfortunately, synthetic oxytocin or even an epidural can interfere with the natural regulation of oxytocin that both mother and baby experience during labor and after delivery.

As much as oxytocin enhances the mother-child relationship, it can also help to generate a strong bond between romantic partners. We experience a surge of oxytocin during orgasm. Kind words or a gentle touch can also drive oxytocin levels up, enhancing the experience of what we identify as love and trust.

**When the Body Cannot Make Oxytocin**

Unfortunately, there are situations in life when oxytocin levels dip too low, or worse, never rise to the surface.

Some examples are:

1. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).** Those with PTSD are in a constant state of anxiety and low-grade fear. This anxiety can climax when startled or in trigger situations. It has been found that oxytocin reduces background anxiety in those with PTSD. [1] Even though oxytocin can reduce anxiety after trauma, it does not affect the actual memory of the trauma.

2. **Childhood Trauma.** Trauma during infancy or childhood can affect oxytocin levels for years, decades, or even an entire lifetime. This kind of trauma can range from severe abuse during childhood to a divorce between parents. When trauma during childhood occurs, the body and mind engage an adaptive defense mechanism that reduces levels of oxytocin. This type of programming is a survival mechanism. It can affect relationships and even physical health.

3. **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).** In certain cases of autism, the receptor site for oxytocin is genetically not available. When oxytocin has nowhere to go, it cannot do its job. Sometimes in those with ASD, the production of oxytocin is also drastically low. [2, 3]
How the Hormone of Love Affects Digestion

Dr. Michael Gershon, author of The Second Brain and chairman of the department of anatomy and cell biology at Columbia University, has found that many of his patients who come in for chronic gut disorders have a history of childhood trauma.

According to Gershon and others in his field, the brain in the head shares a unique connection with the brain in the gut – or our “second brain.” This is because the gastrointestinal tract is full of nerve cell networks, called the enteric nervous system. The enteric nervous system helps to regulate behavior, much like the brain that belongs to the central nervous system.

When Gershon first put forth the theory that the gastrointestinal tract is in fact a “second brain,” equipped with neurotransmitters and the ability to control behavior, his concept was mostly ridiculed. Now, in the new field of neurogastroenterology, scientists are discovering the many ways that the brain and the gut influence each other.

For example, serotonin is the neurotransmitter that is responsible for a feeling of happiness and wellbeing. It is mostly made in the gut. In fact, the cells lining the intestinal wall produce approximately 95% of the body’s total serotonin.

Like serotonin, Gershon has determined that oxytocin influences what is going on in the digestive system as much as it influences what is going on in the brain.

In a 2010 study, Gershon found that oxytocin cools down gastrointestinal inflammation. [4] Intestinal inflammation can not only cause abdominal discomfort, but it can also contribute to more serious disorders that involve the immune system, such as:

- Food sensitivities
- Autoimmune disorders
- Systemic infections like Candidiasis

What Is Good for One Brain Is Good for the Other

It has been found that even small expressions of support between family members and friends will stimulate the release of oxytocin.

What this means is that love, trust, sincerity, and heartfelt touch can actually prompt the body to heal on a physical level.

When oxytocin levels are stable and elevated, the physical body benefits as much as the mind.

- Oxytocin reduces levels of cortisol in the body and lowers blood pressure. [5]
- Oxytocin and the receptor site for oxytocin have been found in the intestinal tract. [6]
- Oxytocin improves gut motility and decreases intestinal inflammation. [7]

Repair Gut Function and Naturally Build Oxytocin Levels in the Body

Because oxytocin and its receptors are found in the gastrointestinal tract, healing the gut is an essential part of any program designed to heal mental and emotional trauma.

This means taking small steps to increase physical energy while gently detoxifying the multiple systems in your body. One of the best ways to accomplish this naturally and easily is by correcting digestion with fermented foods and probiotic beverages.
If you are new to fermented foods and probiotic beverages, begin with a small portion of truly fermented sauerkraut or the juice from a batch of fermented vegetables. Remember:

- The good bacteria in fermented foods and beverages promote both healing and detoxification all at once.

- Beneficial bacteria have the ability to metabolize heavy metals! This means that they can gently help to clean up toxic debris that affects energy levels and mental performance.

- Fermented foods and beverages fight infection. Infection can contribute to multiple states of mental discomfort, including brain fog, fatigue, panic attacks, and depression.

- Good bacteria have been found to contribute to mental wellbeing by producing feel-good chemicals that the brain picks up and understands.

References:


http://bodyecology.com/articles/this-bliss-hormone-can-heal-your-body-the-many-benefits-of-oxytocin