

OF HORMONES, MOTHERHOOD, WEIGHT GAIN AND EXTENDED BREASTFEEDING

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Categories: [Breastfeeding](#), [Weight loss](#)

Tags: [breastfeeding](#), [estrogen dominance](#), [extended breastfeeding](#), [hormones](#), [india](#), [indian](#), [mom](#), [motherhood](#), [mumbai](#), [primal](#), [Starting solids](#), [weight gain](#), [Weight loss](#)



I've been quite a healthy eater for a long time. I eat **real food** and minimize my consumption of anything processed. I don't even feed my 17 month old anything processed and we live on veggies, chicken, eggs, fruits and the likes.

During pregnancy I barely gained weight and after I gave birth my weight was half a kilo less than my pre pregnancy weight.

I am still breastfeeding my 17 month old but he self weaned from his afternoon nursing session at 14 months. At 15 months postpartum Aunt Flo paid a visit after almost two years of absence (9 months of pregnancy and 15 months of nursing) **and my hormones went out of whack!**

Many mothers who do extended breastfeeding or exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months will tell you that when they start weaning they suddenly balloon. A few of my friends had told me that they gained weight for the first time since getting pregnant only after their child started eating solids.

The rationale behind this is that your appetite is ravenous when breastfeeding, but you are burning the calories. However once you start weaning, the calories expended by you reduce but your appetite is still ravenous because your stomach has expanded.

This makes sense on some levels, except; I am someone who is highly tuned into my body. I conceived my son at first attempt and I remember telling my husband the moment I ovulated that I think I have just ovulated and it's time to make a baby. I didn't even have to wait for a pregnancy test to know that I was pregnant.

I have spent the last 4 years learning how to tune into my body and listen to what ever it's telling me.

So the logic of my body eating without really feeling the need to just didn't add up.

Around the time I started menstruating again I gained weight all over, my arms, my face, my thighs were all bigger than they ever were. After awhile I lost the weight on my upper body and my jeans got very snug. I felt a distinct fattening of my rear.

I have always had skinny thighs and butt in comparison to my upper body. I've never been pear shaped or had a nice rounded butt. Therefore this tilt in balance (the new curves) prompted me to dig deeper.

I learnt about estrogen dominance.

Hormones in our bodies are very delicately balanced. Anything that throws it off balance can lead to **weight gain** or **weight loss**. Many women struggle with hormonal issues and try everything to lose weight but can't.

Estrogen dominance is a condition whereby the balance between estrogen and progesterone goes out of gear. So you may have very high levels of estrogen in comparison to progesterone or

progesterone may be very low as compared to normal levels of estrogen.

While the toddler starts getting more and more calories from solids he needs less and less milk.

Therefore after extended breastfeeding, having estrogen dominance or lack of progesterone in comparison to estrogen totally adds up.

When the baby is born, your body is swimming in progesterone from the placenta, and your body creates prolactin while nursing to inhibit ovulation. Progesterone in a non-pregnant woman is provided by ovulation, so failing to ovulate for months would decrease your progesterone levels. Without progesterone to counteract it, estrogen levels would go up. When you do finally ovulate there is a surge of estrogen and a surge of progesterone. Because progesterone has been suppressed for so many months, and estrogen levels are high, there is a huge imbalance.

Some symptoms of estrogen dominance are:

- water retention
- bloating
- migraines specially around ovulation
- PMS like symptoms starting from around the time of ovulation until menses
- acne
- sluggish metabolism
- weight gain specially in the belly, hips, butt and thighs
- loss of lean muscle mass (boo hoo!) amongst many others.

It's funny that this is so logical and obvious, yet when I did an Internet search for weight gain after weaning; everything points to over eating and burning fewer calories, as we're not producing as much breast milk.

For women, weight gain is so hormonal and I don't think women's issues are talked about that much. I wrote another post on my blog about how [sleep post baby](#) is broken and hence also leads to weight gain.

As women we owe it to ourselves to stop taking advice and research at face value and dig deeper. Most of our issues are not as black and white like: eat less and you will lose weight, or use [sunscreen](#) to stop UV rays (hint: sunscreen is a major cause of many modern health issues)

For me, because I knew it just couldn't be the - me eating more even though I don't need the extra calories - excuse (because my body would tell me if I was over eating right?) prompted me to RESEARCH! And guess what, I still don't have a magical cure! Apart from weight gain I am no longer feeling my old self. My migraines have returned (mid-cycle and during my period), I no longer feel fit and healthy, I feel fatigued. After being in such excellent form for the last four years (since going primal) it's hard to come to terms with.

We owe it to ourselves to ask tons of questions for the sake of our health and our children's and

experiment till we find the answer.

What do you think? Did you experience unexplained weight gain after weaning? Did you write it off as overeating?

Stay tuned and if I find a way out or just wait it out I'll write about it here!

For now though, here's to the new curvilicious me ;)

Thanks for reading!

Read the update on my journey [here](#).

Further reading : <http://www.progesteronetherapy.com/estrogen-dominance.html>

UPDATE: I get about 10 searches a day with the search words hormones, weight gain, extended nursing / breastfeeding that leads moms here to this post. Obviously there are tons of us who are in the same boat without answers.

I personally feel that our bodies are expecting to get pregnant again and hence storing fat. I also think we lose muscle stores for some reason. I also hear a lot of moms lose weight when they stop breastfeeding and improve bone density. We just need to wait and watch.

There is NOTHING out there when it comes to hormones and weaning/ extended breastfeeding etc. Maybe because we're far and few or we're too busy to look for solutions writing it off as post motherhood wierd stuff.

I liked this post I recently read on the similar

topic: <http://www.modernalternativemama.com/blog/2011/11/18/the-truth-about-recovering-from-pregnancy.html#.U8pHtY2Swao> and

this <http://www.itbuildscharacter.com/parenting/parenting-support/breastfeeding-hormones-and-weaning>

Our hormones are out of whack and the postpartum process is going to take way longer than we thought. So hang in there !

