

PMS

PMS

# Premenstrual Syndrome

## The menstrual cycle

The menstrual cycle happens every month and is the way your body prepares for a possible pregnancy. Each cycle starts on the first day of your period and ends the day before your next period starts. In the menstrual cycle, there are two main hormones called oestrogen and progesterone. Naturally, the levels of these hormones change throughout the cycle.



## What is PMS?

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is a group of physical and emotional changes that can happen either before or when you are on your period. These changes (called symptoms) are related to changes in the hormone levels.

Nearly all women get some symptoms, which usually begin two weeks before your period and get better once your period starts. Some common symptoms are:

Mood swings (feeling irritable or tearful)

Sore or tender breasts

Feeling bloated

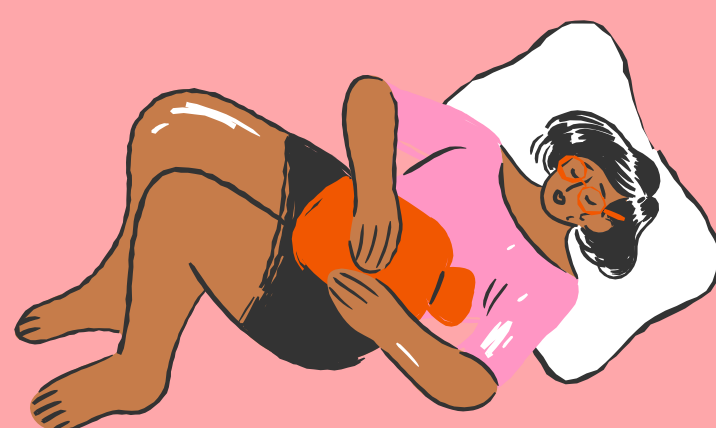
Changes in appetite and food cravings

Headaches

Tiredness and trouble sleeping

Changes to skin or hair

Muscle and joint pain



PMDD

PMDD

# Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder

## What is PMDD?

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) is a more severe form of PMS where symptoms significantly affect your daily life and wellbeing. It can make it difficult to work, socialise and have healthy relationships. As well as the above symptoms, people with PMDD may experience the following symptoms:

Sadness or hopelessness

Anxiety or tension

Extreme moodiness

Marked irritability or anger



Some people with PMDD will have thoughts about suicide. If you are feeling this way and are worried you might act on it, get help by calling 999, or going to your local A&E, or contacting Samaritans for free on 116 123 to talk.

## What is the cause of PMS?

PMS is probably linked to the changes in hormone levels during the menstrual cycle. Some people are more affected by these changes than others.

Things that can worsen PMS symptoms:

Being overweight

Lack of exercise

Stress



Eating foods with a high salt content (crisps, convenience meals and fast food), caffeinated drinks (energy drinks, coffee) and alcohol

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PMDD



## What can I do to help with these symptoms?

**Exercise regularly:** Aim for 30 minutes of exercise on most days – this can be anything you enjoy, like walking, dancing, or swimming! If you can, add strength exercises and spend less time sitting down.



**Eat a healthy balanced diet:** Fill your plate with a variety of foods, like fruits, vegetables, and whole foods (wholemeal bread, brown rice, and whole-wheat pasta). Include lean meats (fish and chicken). Cut back on sugary, salty, and caffeinated foods and drinks.

**Find ways to reduce stress:** This can be difficult but try mindfulness, exercise, hobbies, and relaxation techniques.



**Take painkillers:** Try paracetamol and ibuprofen for cramps and pains.

**Talk with someone you trust:** Sharing feelings and experiences can help with the emotional PMS symptoms.

## Don't suffer in silence.

### When should I see my GP?

Talking to a health professional can help you find ways to manage your symptoms. You should book an appointment with your GP if your symptoms are:

Severe and impacting your daily life,

Not improving with lifestyle changes,

Causing significant emotional distress (feeling hopeless, increased anger).

Keeping a diary of your symptoms is really helpful. Write down how you feel each day and where you are in your menstrual cycle. Remember to bring it with you to your appointment!



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# PMS & PMDD

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## What might your health professional ask?

During your appointment, your healthcare professional may ask you about:

Your menstrual cycle

Your symptoms and how they affect your daily life

If you have any other health conditions

Any medications or supplements you are taking

Any stresses in your life

Your diet and exercise habits

What is most bothering you and what you hope to gain from your appointment

## What else might happen at your appointment?

Not everyone needs to be examined but if it is recommended: You can ask for a chaperone or bring someone with you. You can ask for your appointment to be with a female.

There is no special test for PMS, but blood tests may be arranged to check to rule out other causes of your symptoms.

You might talk about or be started on treatment. This could include lifestyle changes, medication, and talking therapy.

You might also be referred to other health professionals for further consultation, including a nurse specialist, a dietician, a counsellor, a psychologist, or a gynaecologist.

