

# PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME (PMS)



## What is Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)?

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is the name given to the physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms that can occur in the two weeks before a woman's monthly period. It is also known as premenstrual tension (PMT).

## What are the symptoms of PMS?

More than 100 different symptoms of PMS have been recorded. You may have just one or two symptoms or have several but the most common are listed below.

These symptoms usually improve when the period starts and they disappear a few days afterwards.

## Who gets premenstrual syndrome?

Nearly all women of child-bearing age have some premenstrual symptoms but women aged between their late 20s and early 40s are most likely to experience PMS. However, it can affect you at any age, even if you are less than 20 years old.

A small number of women find that their symptoms are so severe that it stops them living their normal lives. This is due to a more intense type of PMS known as premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD). A GP can help to determine if you have PMDD and may be able to offer you treatment to manage the symptoms you're experiencing.

PHYSICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	BEHAVIOURAL
Fluid retention / feeling bloated Pain & discomfort in tummy Headaches Changes to skin and hair Backache Muscle and joint pain Breast tenderness Insomnia Dizziness Tiredness Nausea Weight gain	Mood swings Feeling upset or emotional Feeling irritable or angry Depressed mood Crying and tearfulness Anxiety Difficulty concentrating Confusion and forgetfulness Restlessness Decreased self-esteem	Loss of libido Appetite changes / cravings

## How is premenstrual syndrome diagnosed?

There is no test for PMS. The diagnosis of PMS is based on your symptoms.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell if your symptoms are due to PMS, or if they are due to other conditions such as anxiety or depression. Your doctor may ask you to keep a diary of symptoms over a couple of months. It is when the symptoms occur, not just their nature or type that indicates PMS.

If you have PMS you may have:

- Symptoms that start sometime after ovulation, which occurs about two weeks before the start of a period. Typically, symptoms occur during the five days before a period. However, some women have symptoms for two weeks or so leading up to a period. Typically, symptoms gradually get worse as the period approaches.
- Symptoms that go within three to four days after your period starts.

Symptoms that occur all the time are not due to PMS.

## Why does it happen and what can you do to help yourself?

The exact cause of PMS is not fully understood. However, it is thought to be linked to the changing levels of hormones in the body during a woman's menstrual cycle. Certain lifestyle factors such as lack of exercise, stress and eating a poor diet are also thought to aggravate the symptoms of PMS. PMS usually improves after the menopause.

There is no cure for PMS but the symptoms can often be managed with treatment.

This may include medication, hormone or psychological treatments. Certain lifestyle changes can also help to manage symptoms.

The following may help:

- Healthy Eating
- Reducing caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Learning techniques on how to manage stress.
- Read about it. It may help you to understand what is happening. This may relieve some of the anxiety about symptoms.
- Keep a diary. Note the days you feel irritable, low, anxious, or have any other symptom that you feel may be part of PMS. See how long symptoms last before a period. Then it may be worth noting in a diary when your periods are due. As you can predict when your PMS symptoms are likely to occur, you can expect them and be ready for them.

*Information Source NHS*

*Linda Roy*

**National Equality Officer**

**Email: [lroy@cwu.org](mailto:lroy@cwu.org)**

**Tel: 0208 971 7238**

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