



# Women's Health: PMS

**Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is a medical condition that affects women of childbearing age, and it can severely affect their lives. PMS is related to a variety of physical and psychological symptoms that occur just before each menstrual period.**

## Causes

The exact cause of PMS is unknown, but it seems to be related to the fluctuating levels of hormones, including estrogen and progesterone, that occur in preparation for menstruation.

## Symptoms

There are many symptoms of PMS, and the number and severity of symptoms vary from woman to woman. In addition, the severity of the symptoms can vary from month to month, and may include:

- Bloating
- Breast tenderness
- Weight gain
- Trouble concentrating
- Headaches/backaches
- Skin problems/acne
- Fatigue
- Tearfulness
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Mood swings and/or depression

## Diagnosis and Treatment

There is no single test to diagnose PMS. Occasionally, a thyroid test can help make a diagnosis of PMS. Treatment for PMS is based on relieving symptoms. Treatment begins with a thorough assessment of your symptoms, as well as their impact on your daily life.

Learning to cope with underlying challenges in your life may help relieve the stress and irritability you feel prior to your period. If you experience severe anxiety, irritability or depression, counseling and/or medication may be helpful. A healthy diet is important to overall physical and mental wellness. Making changes in your diet, including reducing the amount of caffeine, salt and sugar, may help relieve symptoms of PMS.

Like a healthy diet, regular exercise can improve your overall health and help relieve and help you cope with the monthly symptoms associated with PMS.

In some cases, nutritional supplements can help, such as vitamin B6, calcium and magnesium. Over-the-counter pain relievers, such as aspirin and ibuprofen, may help relieve symptoms such as headache, backache, cramps and breast tenderness. Medications are prescribed occasionally in cases of severe depression or anxiety.

## Prevention

PMS itself cannot be prevented, but with education and appropriate treatment of symptoms, most women can find relief. A healthy lifestyle, including exercise and a proper diet, also can help you better manage your PMS symptoms.

*For 30 to 40 percent of PMS sufferers, the physical pain and emotional stress are severe enough to affect their daily lives.*