

Refers to a range of symptoms occurring in the lead up to their menstrual period.

What to look for

One or more of these symptoms may appear about a week before your period:

- food cravings.
- bloating and fluid retention.
- breast swelling and pain.
- acne.
- weight gain.
- Headaches, backaches.
- urinary disorders.
- moodiness, anxiety, crying.
- Insomnia.
- drowsiness and fatigue.
- nausea and clumsiness

Some women with premenstrual syndrome can become violent and aggressive during this time.

PMS is a physical condition that typically recurs during a particular phase of the menstrual cycle. It is common for most women to experience at least one PMS symptom sometime in her life and normally it occurs more regularly. The symptoms vary with each woman.

Hormonal fluctuations can make this condition worse and more pronounced such as after childbirth, a miscarriage, an abortion. Women who discontinue birth-control pills may also experience PMS.

Causes

There is no conclusive research as yet, however, there is speculation that PMS is the result of a hormonal imbalance.

It has also been suggested that a deficiency in a particular hormone may be responsible for PMS. Some say it may be biochemical.

Dietary deficiencies, including a lack of vitamin B6 and essential fatty acids, could be a possible cause. One type of PMS, characterised by headache, dizziness, heart pounding, increased appetite, and a craving for chocolate, is thought to be the result of a magnesium deficiency brought on by stress.

Traditional Treatment

A lot of women do not treat their PMS and live through it. There are treatments which are able to relieve the symptoms and give you some comfort.

Some doctors prescribe various hormones to relieve symptoms. This treatment is controversial and may not work with all women.

Because there are risks associated with hormonal treatments, many doctors prefer approaches that emphasise a good diet, regular exercise, and other lifestyle changes such as those described below.

Lifestyle - Studies have shown that regular exercise lessens PMS symptoms. Getting adequate sleep is also important for the successful treatment of PMS.

Personal Care

- Stick to a healthy diet (see above)
- Exercise regularly.
- Reduce stress and increase sleep.
- Take recommended vitamin supplements.
- Increase relaxation techniques such as calming hobbies, warm baths with favourite aromatherapy oils in them (perhaps the ones suggested above), try to get a massage or facial.
- Use a hot-water bottle to ease backaches and muscle aches
- Abstain from alcohol before your period.

When to seek further professional advice

- your symptoms are severe enough to interfere with your normal functions;