

A photograph of a woven basket filled with fresh green asparagus spears, resting on a rustic wooden surface. The asparagus is vibrant green with some purple-tinged tips. The basket is made of light-colored twine or straw. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the asparagus and the wooden surface.

# 7 DAY EATING PLAN

*Nigel Denby*

*&*

*Amanda Moore*

# EAT TO BEAT PMS

*An important place to start....*



# IMPROVING YOUR DIET IS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP..

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) recommend that improving your diet and lifestyle are important first steps to managing PMS.

# HOW CAN DIET MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

*Diet and lifestyle can significantly benefit health and may make managing PMS symptoms easier. Currently, there is no evidence that diet can completely eliminate PMS symptoms, however, many women find that their diet can have an influence on their symptoms and how they cope with PMS in their day-to-day life.*

This includes:

- Eating more complex carbohydrates and wholegrains, especially those with a low glycaemic load (GL).
- Avoiding or limiting caffeine which can increase tension and irritability.
- Limiting salt and salty foods to help prevent bloating.
- Eating small frequent meals and snacks.
- Choosing low fat foods to help maintain a healthy weight.
- Using specific nutrients and herbal preparations that can help some women improve their PMS symptoms.

Following the NAPS dietary advice is unlikely to be sufficient for managing severe PMS / PMDD but is a vital component alongside appropriate medical treatment for the relief of symptoms.

A varied diet including foods from all of the food groups is the foundation for general health and managing PMS. Keeping physically active and eating well is also the best way to maintain a healthy weight and protect from weight related health problems.

## *Eat small frequent meals*

Follow the ideal meal pattern below - avoid gaps of more than about 4 hours between eating

- ▶ Breakfast
- ▶ Mid-morning snack
- ▶ Lunch
- ▶ Mid-afternoon snack
- ▶ Evening meal

## *What about snacks?*

Choose nutritious snacks over confectionery, crisps, cakes and biscuits. Nutrient dense snacks will keep you feeling fuller for longer and will provide important vitamins and minerals.

- ▶ Hummus - this can be eaten with wholemeal pitta bread, crisp bread, celery or carrot
- ▶ Guacamole - this can be eaten with wholemeal pitta bread, crisp bread, celery or carrot sticks
- ▶ Black and green olive tapenade - this can be eaten with wholemeal pitta bread
- ▶ Fruit (e.g. apples, pears, bananas, citrus fruits such as oranges, clementines)
- ▶ Live yoghurt e.g. organic yoghurt
- ▶ Rice cakes, crisp breads, oatcakes
- ▶ Dried Fruit (e.g. figs, dates, apricots)

## *Eat more complex carbohydrate and whole grains, especially those with a low glycemic load*

Studies have shown that many women have a higher energy or calorie intake in the luteal phase of their cycle and this has been shown to be even more common in overweight women with PMS. Some women with PMS experience carbohydrate cravings, especially for sweet foods and chocolate. It is thought these cravings may be caused by abnormal levels of a

hormone called serotonin which may affect food and appetite. Some women who experience anxiety and depression as part of their PMS find that small regular meals based on complex carbohydrates with a low GL and wholegrains can help improve their symptoms. Complex carbohydrates with a low GL and/or those containing wholegrains include:

- ▶ Granary and seeded breads, rye bread and crisp breads soya and linseed bread
- ▶ Whole oats, no added sugar/salt muesli, Bulgur wheat, quinoa
- ▶ Wholemeal pasta, brown basmati rice
- ▶ Sweet potato

## *Exercise regularly & reduce stress*

There is little doubt that stress makes PMS symptoms worse. It helps to be aware of the role stress plays and try to ensure you get enough sleep and time to relax. Exercise can also help to reduce excess adrenalin and make you feel calmer.

## *EAT TO BEAT PMS 7 Day Plan - it's SO easy!*

Sample 7 days below - feel free to mix and match! (Recipes at the back of this booklet)

<i>Day</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Morning snack</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>PM snack</i>	<i>Dinner</i>
1	boiled omega-3 enriched eggs with toast  Fruit juice	Apple & small natural yoghurt	Tuna, or any oily fish, with salad	Small handful of almonds & dried apricots	Pork and red pepper stir fry with sweet potato
2	Porridge made with water, milk or soya milk plus chopped fresh strawberries.  Vegetable juice	Guacamole with 2 oat cakes and small square of cheese	Carrot and coriander soup with 1 slice of granary bread / toast	Pot of natural / yoghurt or soya yoghurt & low GL granola	Chicken breast with a medium baked sweet potato and green vegetables
3	No added sugar muesli with yoghurt and berries.  Fruit juice	2 plums & few nuts	Prawn salad with 4 oatcakes	Piece of Edam cheese with pumpernickel bread/ryvita	Roast Fish (any) with mushroom and coriander, with corn on the cob
4	Fruit smoothie with milk/soya milk and any fruits of your choice. Slice wholegrain bread	2 squares 70% cocoa chocolate (i.e. Lindt / Green & Blacks)	Avocado salad with Caesar dressing and pearl barley	1 Peach & 10 walnut halves	Asparagus chicken with brown rice
5	Toast with peanut butter  Fresh vegetable juice	Carrot batons with hummus dip & 2 oat cakes	Tomato / tomato & basil soup with crusty granary bread	Handful of pistachio nuts and peach	Tarragon Turkey steaks with cauli mash
6	Scrambled eggs with smoked salmon or chopped grilled bacon and granary toast	Small pot mixed nuts with cherries	Small baked sweet potato, natural yoghurt dressing and green salad	2 oatcakes with low fat cream cheese	Quinoa salad with chicken
7	Energising muesli	2 rice cakes and cottage cheese	Lentil soup (Fresh in a carton) & oat cakes	Cherries and small cube cheddar cheese	Fresh tuna with garlic and mixed green vegetables and a small sweet potato

# AVOIDING OR LIMITING CAFFEINE CAN HELP REDUCE TENSION & IRRITABILITY

Many PMS sufferers, especially those with severe symptoms report that when they reduce their caffeine intake over a few months their symptoms become more manageable. Those women who drink more than 3-4 cups of caffeinated tea, coffee or cola per day, may wish to gradually reduce this over a two-week period and then monitor their PMS symptoms for three months to see if there is any improvement. Non-caffeinated drinks include:

- ▶ Herb and fruit teas
- ▶ Rooibos tea and most green teas
- ▶ Non caffeinated soft drinks, try to choose low calorie or "diet" varieties
- ▶ Fruit juices with no added sugar

# LIMIT SALT & SALTY FOOD

Try to use more herbs and spices to flavour foods rather than adding salt during cooking to reduce bloating and water retention.



# IS IT ADVISABLE TO CUT DOWN ON ALCOHOL?

Alcohol can aggravate PMS symptoms for a number of reasons:

- ▶ It can cause fluctuating blood sugar levels, which are thought to impact on PMS symptoms.
- ▶ Alcohol can disrupt sleep patterns and cause tension, which may be a symptom of your PMS.
- ▶ Alcohol can lower stores of essential nutrients such as zinc which is necessary for the processing of EFAs which have been helpful in reducing PMS symptoms.

So it is advisable to reduce the amount consumed, even to the point of giving up alcohol completely, in order to see a reduction in PMS symptoms.



*Alcohol can aggravate PMS symptoms*



FOCUS ON

# NUTRIENTS

*Are there any nutrients I should try and increase in my diet?*

There have been lots of reports in the press about individual foods or nutrients being helpful for PMS symptom relief. Some may be helpful but there is a lack of good evidence to support taking high dose supplements of specific vitamins or minerals, in some cases this may even have a detrimental effect. On days when it difficult to eat healthily, it may be useful to take a good quality multi vitamin or mineral supplement to top up your intake.

There are also a number of herbal products which are often quoted by PMS sufferers as being helpful in relieving

symptoms. Amongst the most commonly used are: black cohosh, wild yam root; agnus castus (chasterberry), St John's Wort, and dong quai. Agnus castus (chasteberry) is the only herbal product where any benefit to PMS sufferers has been shown in controlled trials, and agnus castus is approved in Germany as a treatment for PMS at a dose of 20mg/day. Although some GPs recommend PMS sufferers to try agnus castus in the UK, it is not officially recognised as a treatment. Before trying any herbal product it's important to consult a health professional.

*Some studies have shown us that PMS is associated with certain nutrients being low in the diet. Try to eat as varied a diet as possible, eat food in its natural state, avoiding processed foods and sugar. In particular you may find it useful to ensure you have adequate intake of these nutrients:*

## VITAMIN B6

This is one of the most widely discussed vitamins for the treatment of PMS. It has probably attracted so much media attention because it is involved in the action of so many enzymes in the body and has also been associated with depression because of its role in maintaining the body's levels of serotonin - the so called "happy hormone".

There is little good evidence to support taking a supplement of vitamin B6, and taking high doses can be dangerous. Although vitamin B6 is found in most foods, the best food sources include:

- Lean meats
- Liver
- Fish
- Wholegrain breads and cereals
- Peanuts
- Potatoes
- Green Cabbage
- Peas
- Bananas

## VITAMIN E

Vitamin E is involved in regulating a female hormone called prostaglandin and in some studies a 400IU daily supplement of vitamin E has been shown to help relieve breast tenderness. Good food sources of vitamin E include:

- Avocados
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Wheatgerm
- Vegetable oils
- Wholegrain breads and cereals

## MAGNESIUM

A deficiency of magnesium has been suggested as a possible cause of PMS, and interestingly many UK women (74%) have a low intake of this mineral however a direct link between the nutrient and PMS has never been proven in clinical trials. In some trials women have seen improvements in the PMS symptoms when they have increased their intake. PMS related mood swings, fluid retention, migraine and anxiety have all improved in some clinical trial groups. A 200mg daily supplement may be helpful.

Magnesium rich foods include:

- Milk
- Breads
- Cereals
- Potatoes

## *CALCIUM*

Calcium has been linked with PMS for decades after it was discovered that levels fall in the body during the week before menstruation and there have been several good quality controlled trials which have shown a positive effect on PMS symptoms when either dietary intake has been increased or when a calcium supplement has been introduced. Some studies have also found a beneficial effect when a combined calcium and vitamin D supplement has been taken. Doses of calcium supplements involved in clinical trials have ranged between 1500mg-2500mg/day. Good sources of calcium include:

- Dairy foods
- Calcium enriched soya alternatives to dairy
- Oily fish with bones is also a good source of vitamin D
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Tofu
- Green leafy vegetables

## *VITAMIN D*

Vitamin D may improve PMS psychological symptoms. The main source of vitamin D is sunlight. The vitamin is produced in the skin when exposed to sunlight. Food sources include:

- All oily fish
- Eggs
- Margarine
- Fortified breakfast cereals

## *PHYTOESTROGENS*

Phytoestrogens are natural oestrogens produced in plants. They have a much less potent effect in the body than human oestrogens but have been shown in some studies to help relieve PMS related headache, breast tenderness, cramps and swelling. The active ingredients in phytoestrogens which are thought to have a beneficial effect are isoflavones. The best food sources of isoflavones are:

- Soya beans and soya products
- Wholegrains
- Chickpeas
- Millet
- Sorghum



### *About eating a low GL diet*

There is growing scientific evidence that a diet with a reduced glycemic load is associated with lots of health benefits such as a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and being overweight. A low GL diet may also have benefits for cognitive function and mood, although our data is limited. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists recommend that a low GL diet is part of a healthy lifestyle approach to managing PMS.

There is much confusion about the terms low GL, low GI and low carbohydrate. Firstly carbohydrates are a necessary and important part of your diet. They supply glucose for energy for both your body and brain. The term carbohydrate is commonly used to refer to starchy foods such as bread, pasta and potatoes but vegetables, fruits and simple sugars in sweets and drinks also contain carbohydrate. After eating a meal or snack containing carbohydrate the digested food produces an increase in blood glucose concentration. The size and duration of this increase in

glucose varies for different carbohydrates - cooked potatoes and sweets for example produce a very rapid rise and fall, while a food like porridge produces a gentler more sustained spike in glucose. The Glycaemic Index (GI) is a measure of the extent of this rise in glucose and the duration, for a fixed amount of carbohydrate. The Glycaemic Load (GL) takes into account the glycemic index and in addition how much carbohydrate is typically present in a normal portion of the food. GL is therefore a more useful practical measure when evaluating our diet.



## 5 TIPS FOR EATING LOW GL

1. Eat small portions of starchy high GL foods such as bread, processed cereals, potatoes, pasta, and rice. Where you can, switch to low GL alternatives such as pumpernickel bread, porridge, quinoa and starchy vegetables other than potatoes, such as sweetcorn.
2. Include lots of low-GL vegetables at every meal. Aim for a minimum of five servings of fruit and veg per day. Lightly cook veggies for the minimum time or eat them raw.
3. Increase your intake of pulses (beans, peas, lentils).
4. Always include a protein-rich food as part of your meal or snack to reduce the GL. Chose from lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, low-fat dairy foods, nuts or soya foods
5. Cut right down/avoid highly refined snack foods such as sweets, crisps or corn chips, cakes, biscuits, and pastries made from white flour and sugar. Instead, choose nuts and seeds, or dried fruits such as apple rings or apricots. Instead of milk chocolate, snack on a couple of squares of dark chocolate with over 70 per cent cocoa solids.

## Recipes

### **Pork & Pepper stir-fry** Two Pork fillets diced (can also use chicken, turkey or beef) - serves 2

- ½ a medium onion, chopped
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Black pepper
- 1 tbsp tomato puree
- 2 tbsp water
- ½ tsp of chilli powder
- 1 tbsp single cream or crème fraîche

Fry pork, onion, and chilli powder in olive oil until browned and cooked through. Add red pepper until softened. Add all other ingredients except cream stirring. Once you have achieved the desired consistency add cream and stir again. Serve with mixed salad or low GL vegetables and a baked sweet potato.

### **Asparagus chicken - serves 2**

- 1 tsp butter / olive oil based spread
- 2 chicken breasts
- 8 asparagus spears, cooked and drained
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- Handful toasted almonds
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp tarragon
- 1 red pepper, deseeded and chopped
- 125g single cream or crème fraîche

Fry chicken breasts in butter until cooked through thoroughly. Add cream / crème fraîche and bring to boil, reduce heat and stir until cream has reduced and thickened in separate pan fry red pepper, asparagus, onions and tarragon until tender. Add this to pan with chicken and cream and add mustard, stirring, heat through thoroughly. Sprinkle with almonds and serve with brown rice.

### **Roast fish with mushroom & coriander - serves 4**

- 4 fillets of fish (plaice, cod or any white fish)
- 50g butter or olive oil based spread (to butter the dish)
- 1 tbsp white wine vinegar
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 12 button mushrooms, finely chopped
- 30g butter or olive oil based spread
- Handful of fresh coriander, chopped
- 100ml crème fraîche
- Black pepper

Pre-heat oven to 200 degrees C, Gas Mark 6. Butter large ovenproof dish. Make cuts in the fish fillets, place in the dish, and add lemon juice, white wine vinegar and pepper. Cook for 15 mins, basting regularly. Meanwhile melt 30g butter in large pan, add mushrooms and fry until golden brown. Stir in coriander and crème fraîche stirring and heat through. Remove fish from oven and serve with sauce poured over. Serve with green low GL vegetables such as asparagus or broccoli and baby new potatoes.

### **Tarragon turkey steaks - serves 4**

- 4 large turkey breast steaks
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp orange zest
- 75ml orange juice
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp tarragon, freshly chopped
- Fresh tarragon sprigs, to garnish (optional)

Place the turkey steaks in a shallow dish. Blend the mustard with the orange rind and juice, the olive oil, white wine vinegar and chopped tarragon. Pour over the turkey steaks, cover and leave to marinate in the fridge for at least 30 mins, longer if time permits. Turn the steaks and spoon over the marinade occasionally. When ready to cook, drain the turkey, reserving the marinade and place under a medium / hot grill. Cook, turning at least once for 10 - 12 mins or until thoroughly cooked, brushing occasionally with reserved marinade. Garnish with tarragon sprigs. Serve with cauli mash and green beans. Serve with green low GL vegetables.

### **Fresh tuna with garlic - serves 2**

- 2 fresh tuna steaks
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- Black pepper
- 2 cloves garlic or ½ tsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Finely chop garlic and fry in olive oil. Add seasoned tuna steaks and fry until cooked through. Remove tuna steaks from pan and add red wine vinegar, reduce to thicken and then pour over tuna steaks. Serve with salad or cauli mash and green beans.

### **Cauli mash - serves 2**

- Medium sized cauliflower (boiled or steamed) green leaves removed
- 100g grated ½ fat Edam or similar
- 2 tsp butter / olive oil based spread
- Small amount of crème fraîche, cream or milk (optional)
- Black pepper to taste
- 1 tsp mustard (optional)

Fry chicken breasts in butter until cooked through thoroughly. Add cream / crème fraîche and bring to boil, reduce heat and stir until cream has reduced and thickened in separate pan fry red pepper, asparagus, onions and tarragon until tender. Add this to pan with chicken and cream and add mustard, stirring, heat through thoroughly. Sprinkle with almonds and serve with brown rice.

# CONTACT

As a member of NAPS you have access to the NAPS panel of experts. We have Nutritionists and Dietitians sitting on this panel so if you have further questions about your diet or there is anything you don't understand from what you have read in this leaflet then please get in touch via the NAPS website contact information for the expert panel.

[contact@pms.org.uk](mailto:contact@pms.org.uk)

National Association for Premenstrual Syndrome  
41 Old Road  
East Peckham  
Kent  
TN12 5AP

