



A Young Person's Guide: Premenstrual Syndrome

What is PMS?

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) is a medical condition that affects emotional and physical wellbeing, sometimes very severely. It is made up of symptoms that occur in the second half of the menstrual cycle (day 1 of your period is the first day of your cycle, and the last day can be somewhere between 20 and 40 days later and is the day before your next period)

Psychological Symptoms

Common psychological and behavioural symptoms are:

mood swings, depression, anxiety, extreme tiredness, irritability, anger, poor concentration, food cravings

Physical Symptoms

Common physical symptoms are: breast tenderness, bloating, weight gain, headaches, clumsiness, acne

There are 150 identified symptoms – no-one experiences them all! Not all cycles are as bad as each other so sometimes symptoms can be less severe

Produced by the **National Association for Premenstrual Syndromes (NAPS)**, this is a simple guide aimed at helping young people at school, college or work understand and successfully manage their PMS symptoms

What action should I take if I think I have PMS?

Track your cycle: Keep a menstrual diary or chart. Our version can be downloaded from our website www.pms.org.uk under **Support**. A symbol can be chosen for your two or three worst symptoms and used to record them on the chart e.g. H = Headache, B = Bloating, I = Irritability. If the symptom is really bad use a large letter and if it is less severe, use a small letter. Full instructions are given with the chart and we recommend that you track for 2 complete cycles. The chart will assist your GP when deciding if you do have PMS

Self help: A PMS Eating Plan, regular exercise and sufficient sleep are helpful first steps and may be enough for you not to seek medical help. There is evidence that regularly eating 3 main meals and 3 snacks a day with foods containing complex carbohydrates can be beneficial for PMS. This is also helped by leaving no longer than a 3 hour gap between eating, as this helps to keep blood sugar levels stable

Beneficial foods to incorporate into your diet

Wholemeal bread and foods made with wholemeal flour

Potatoes, preferably cooked and unpeeled

Peas, beans and lentils

High fibre breakfast cereals (with little or no added sugar)

Pasta, preferably made from whole wheat

Crispbreads, especially those made from whole rye

Fresh fruit

Basmati and brown rice

Biscuits (with less sugar and made from wholemeal flour)

Contact your GP: If you feel you need medical help make an appointment with your GP when you know you won't have symptoms. Be sure to take your menstrual chart with you, and if you are worried about going to your appointment alone, ask a friend or family member also to go with you. During the appointment, your doctor will suggest a treatment option and we recommend that you ask them how it works. If you find that the treatment causes you any problems, book another appointment. There are a number of treatments for PMS and no one treatment suits everybody. If you are unhappy with any aspect of your appointment or treatment plan, please contact us for advice on contact@pms.org.uk

Talk with those around you: Discussing your PMS with those you know will be easier with some more than others but it can help your relationships, especially if they are under strain during your bad time. Be sure to ask your GP to confirm your PMS well in advance of any school, college or university exams, so that if necessary a special difficulties form can be completed

★ Knowledge is power, ★
and you can beat PMS ★

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