

❖ **PMS (PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME)**

What is PMS?

This is the 'condition' that occurs generally 1 to 2 weeks before you start menstruating and usually stops when your period begins. Every person has different symptoms and they can even change throughout your lifetime...some people's get better or worse with age (depending on how lucky you are!)

What are the most common symptoms of PMS?

You can have one, more or all of the following symptoms;

- × Bloating and fluid retention
- × Cramping
- × Acne
- × Swollen, tender and sore breasts
- × Fatigue and/or trouble sleeping
- × Diarrhoea or constipation
- × Increased or decreased appetite
- × Irritability, tension, mood swings, feelings of anxiety and/or depression
- × Backache
- × Headaches and migraines can be triggered by hormone changes

What can I do to help my symptoms?

Firstly, it is a good idea to reduce caffeine and alcohol during this time as they can increase fluid retention and bloating that occurs. They can both interfere with your natural sleep patterns and possibly make you more irritable and sleep deprived!

It is also best to minimise salt, excess sugars and refined foods as they also can cause fluid retention and are not healthy at the best of times anyway! Instead, adopt a balanced diet using the trusted food pyramid and make sure you get sufficient fruits, vegetables, protein, carbohydrates with lots of whole grains and legumes and a small amounts of healthy fats such as those in almonds or avocados. This will give you more nutrition and energy.

Exercise is really important as it can; increase circulation, reduce stress and anxiety, release endorphins to help you feel good and think more clearly. Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water to flush out excess fluid, prevent constipation and may improve your skin. Also just like in all the movies, hot-water bottles or wheat packs can help to relax the muscles and may help with any cramping.

Try to adopt some relaxation techniques that suit you and make you feel calm and invigorated. It could be yoga, meditation, Pilates or journaling. Try one thing at a time until you find what you love; for me its running and journaling... they are my saviour and free therapy!

What treatments are available to help my PMS?

For severe cramping, inflammation and pain, then anti-inflammatories can help to reduce all of them. They must be taken with food and it is best to use them regularly every 6 hours so you don't wait for the pain to come back.

If your bleeding is very heavy, then one anti-inflammatory in particular that you can get from your pharmacy that can help to reduce the amount of bleeding as well as the pain, inflammation and cramping: PONSTAN. A lot of doctors prescribe it before the heavy duty medications on prescription and it has excellent results in some people.

You may need to try one product and see if it helps as some people work well with one and not another. Advil works amazingly for me but Voltaren Rapid doesn't.

Products:

*Nurofen/Advil: (Ibuprofen 200mg or 400mg)

*Voltaren Rapid: (Diclofenac 12.5mg or 25mg)

*Naprogesic: (Naproxen 225mg)

*Ponstan: (Mefanamic Acid 250mg)

If this doesn't help on its own then you can ADD Paracetamol 500mg or 665mg as they work in different ways to get rid of pain, they are gentle on the stomach and are non-drowsy.

If this still isn't strong enough or you want to be drowsy to go to sleep then try adding Codeine (waiting at least 4-6 hours after your last Paracetamol dose);

- *Panadeine (Paracetamol 500mg + Codeine 9mg) **or**
- *Panadeine Extra (Paracetamol 500mg + Codeine 15mg) **or**
- *Mersyndol Night (Paracetamol 450mg, Codeine 9.75mg + Doxylamine 5mg) (**will cause severe drowsiness for night-time**)

What if this still doesn't help my symptoms?

If your pain and bleeding is still really severe after trying the over-the-counter medications, then it is worth chatting to your doctor. It could be a sign or a polyp, cyst, endometriosis or polycystic ovaries disorder...just to name a few. They will probably send you for an ultrasound to see if there are any abnormalities.

Some doctors prescribe the contraceptive pill to help 'regulate' your hormones so that your periods are not as heavy and it gives you the option of skipping the sugar pills so you don't have a period in a cycle if you don't want one. There is also a medication that can slow down the amount of bleeding and this works very well. They also can prescribe stronger anti-inflammatories for you as well...The moral of the story is; if you are suffering...don't!! There are LOTS of options for you to use and to live pain-free and wonderfully!

What natural products are available for PMS?

There are some natural products that in theory can help reduce the inflammation, cramping, bloating as well as improve your mood.

These are the most common ingredients found in 'PMS' products to help with your symptoms;

- ✓ Folic Acid 400micrograms: B-group vitamin to reduce fluid retention and improve mood
- ✓ Calcium and Vitamin D: to improve the strength of your bones
- ✓ Magnesium 400mg: Acts as a muscle relaxant to reduce cramping and aches
- ✓ Vitamin B6: Excellent for fluid retention and bloating. It can also improve your mood
- ✓ Vitamin E 400IU: strong anti-oxidant
- ✓ Evening Primrose Oil: Act as an anti-inflammatory and reduce pain
- ✓ Fish Oil: acts as an anti-inflammatory
- ✓ Ginseng and Gingko: improve circulation and improve feelings of wellbeing
- ✓ St John's Wort: Improves symptoms of depression and anxiety
- ✓ Dandelion, Celery, Juniper: Acts as diuretics to reduce fluid retention
- ✓ Chasteberry (vitex agnus-castus): this is a herb that seems to regulate and reduce the symptoms of PMS
- ✓ Black Cohosh: has similar effects to oestrogen to help balance hormone levels
- ✓ Tyrosine/Phenylalanine: These are amino acids that are precursors to the 'good' chemical Serotonin to improve your mood and feel better
- ✓ Chromium: this helps to regulate your sugar levels to maintain energy levels and not have sudden cravings for food
- ✓ Zizyphus: is a herb to help calm the thoughts and relax the body; especially if having trouble sleeping at night

Knowing briefly what each ingredient does, you can choose which commercial product suits you and your symptoms the best.

| <u>BRAND</u> | <u>INGREDIENTS</u> | <u>DIRECTIONS</u> |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| <u>Swisse Ultiboost Mood</u> | B6, B12, folic acid, tyrosine., phenylalanine, St John's Wort, Ginseng, Gingko and Schizandra | 1-2 daily |
| <u>Blackmore's Evening Primrose Oil</u> | Evening Primrose Oil: 1G which has 100mg GLA | 1-3 daily |
| <u>Blackmore's Vitex agnus-catus</u> | Chaste tree: 660mg | 1 three times daily |
| <u>Ethical Nutrients Primrose, fish oil and Vitamin E</u> | Fish oil 500mg which has EPA 90mg and DHA 60mg Evening primrose oil 500mg which has GLA 50mg Vitamin E 50IU | 4 three times a day |
| <u>Ethical Nutrients Mega Magnesium:</u> | Magnesium 200mg, zinc, B6, chromium, selenium. | 1-2 daily |
| <u>Ethical Nutrients PMS relief</u> | Chaste tree 1G, zizyphus 1G, B6 25mg, chromium | 1 twice a day |
| <u>Nature's Own PMS Essentials</u> | Vitex agnus castus, black cohosh, withania, B6, magnesium | 1 daily |