



PMDD Explained - Relief Detailed

In the week or so before your menstrual period starts, you may feel sad or cry for no reason. Sometimes you get angry or anxious and yell at loved ones you don't mean to yell at. Your breasts may hurt, or you get headaches, or you feel bloated. You may be very tired, but can't sleep. Some days you have trouble thinking straight. All of these things can mean you have what's called **Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder** - this was previously called Premenstrual Syndrome or PMS.

What causes PMDD?

Having PMDD doesn't mean you're crazy or imagining things. Physical and psychological changes occur during your menstrual cycle. Experts don't know the exact cause of PMDD, but it probably has something to do with the rise and fall of ovarian hormones during the cycle. Too much estrogen and too little progesterone are a theory. These hormones affect brain chemicals, and that may be what causes the symptoms of PMDD.

Do I have PMDD?

If you have symptoms in the week or two before your period starts that interfere with your home, social, or work life, you should tell your doctor. They will examine you and ask you what you're feeling and see if you have some other physical or psychological problem that might be causing your symptoms. If you don't have some other illness, your doctor may start by giving you a diary or chart to take home. You should record any of your symptoms at the end of each day.

After keeping a record of your symptoms, your doctor will review your diary with you to see if you have PMDD. Symptoms appear and disappear in a special pattern in women who have PMDD.

You should definitely discuss how your symptoms affect your everyday life with your doctor. This will help both of you tailor-make a treatment plan for your individual symptoms!

Lifestyle changes can be simple and safe ways to deal with PMDD

- **Regular exercise** helps lift your mood, relieves stress, and reduces bloating. Do 20-30 minutes of aerobic exercise, walking, jogging, or bicycling at least three times a week.
- **Cutting down on salty foods** can help with fluid retention and bloating.

- **Avoiding caffeine** reduces irritability and breast tenderness.
- **Absolutely avoid alcohol**, especially if you have headaches or depression.
- **Eating frequently and properly** is important. Have 5 or 6 small meals a day to help keep your blood sugar levels high. Avoid fatty foods and red meats. Eat more "**complex**" **carbohydrate** foods like whole grains, vegetables, and whole grain cereals. **Snack on fresh fruit** instead of "simple" carbohydrates like cookies, ice cream, or chips, which are also loaded with salt which causes fluid retention. Make sure your diet is rich in foods containing **omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids** - if not then supplement these (see below). This will improve mood and reduce food cravings by increasing your body's serotonin levels naturally!

Nutritional / Herbal Helpers

- **Vitamin B6 and B12** are utilized in the liver to metabolize estrogen – a deficiency of these is easy to correct.
- **Vitamin C and Vitamin E, Selenium and Magnesium 200 mg twice daily** are also needed to metabolize estrogen. (Chocolate cravings during menses may mean low magnesium!). **Read the Vit E Article**.
- Sodium (salt) retention may lower the potassium level in the body - **supplementation with potassium** may also be helpful.
- **Calcium** has been shown to be very helpful in several studies – 1,500 mg. divided into a twice daily dosage regimen has helped many women find relief!
- **Essential Fatty Acids – Soy** is a wonderful way to add a great deal of these to your diet. For individual supplementers, the EFA's especially found in Evening Primrose and Black Currant Oils are very helpful with inflammation, irritability, and depression. These naturally increase your body's feel good hormone Serotonin!
- [St. John's Wort](#) – a gentle depression lifter that may be very helpful.
- **Soy supplementation** - loaded with **phytoestrogens** is beneficial for many! Helps stabilize hormone fluctuations and has a wonderful anti-inflammatory benefit!!
- Other herbs like Dong quai, licorice root, chaste berry, and black cohosh taken for short time periods only may be helpful.
- Natural diuretics like horsetail may be helpful.

- Parsley and Nettle may help normalize menstrual flow.

What else may provide relief?

Some women need prescription medicine to help relieve the symptoms that bother them most.

1. Anti-depressants help those who feel especially sad or blue. Some women do well with medication only around their cycle time, and others need continual medication.
2. Hormone therapy may help relieve other symptoms for some women.
3. Small doses (50-100mg daily) of the diuretic spironolactone taken for two weeks prior to menses to reduce fluid retention, breast tenderness, and weight gain are helpful in some women.

If one medication doesn't work, a combination of supplements and medications may be necessary - you need to **talk to and work with your doctor** to customize your regimen for **your body's special chemistry!**

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