

PMS

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) is a condition of the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle that can cause several physical and emotional symptoms. These symptoms usually resolve within the first 2-3 days of the menstrual cycle. PMS has been reported to affect about 90% of women of reproductive age at some point in their lives. There are four categories of PMS depending on the predominant symptoms:

PMS-A (anxiety)

- mood swings
- irritability
- difficulty sleeping
- clumsiness

PMS-C (craving)

- headache
- cravings for sweet or salty foods
- increased indulgence in refined carbohydrates
- palpitations
- fatigue

PMS-D (depression)

- poor concentration or memory
- low feelings of self worth
- depression
- angry feelings for no reason

PMS-H (hydration)

- weight gain
- breast tenderness
- swelling of extremities
- abdominal bloating

In clinical practice we do not really group women in those categories, as most women have a mixture of symptoms from more than one category and we just really state a woman is experiencing "PMS".

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)

PMDD is a severe form of PMS and can be enough so that symptoms can interfere with normal functioning. A woman may exhibit a decrease in interest in daily activities, change in sleep patterns such as insomnia, sense of feeling overwhelmed or out of control, difficulty concentrating along with other physical symptoms of PMS. This PMS designation was created mainly to allow anti-depressant manufacturers to market their anti-depressants to women with significant PMS. At AIMS, it is unheard of to use prescription drugs to treat this very treatable condition; natural modalities work excellently.

Causes

PMS is oftentimes a multifactorial condition where there is no single cause in every case. In general the condition is caused from a relatively high level of estrogens, whether that is because estrogens

themselves are high, or estrogens are normal but progesterone—the hormone which defrays the expression of excessive estrogen—is low. These are causes of PMS:

1. Relatively higher estrogen in the body—from ovarian production or from foods ingested containing estrogens (agri-industry meat)
2. Environmental pesticides and herbicides which contain estrogen like chemicals
3. Nutrient deficiencies
4. Poor diet
5. Poor liver functioning and poor digestion
6. Dysbiotic gut bacteria—not enough beneficial ones
7. Lack of exercise
8. Smoking, excess drinking, excess coffee
9. Lack of sleep
10. Poorly managed stress in life
11. Thyroid or adrenal imbalances

Diagnosis

There are no specific tests to determine if PMS is present; however, diagnosis is made from gathering the patient's history and having them fill out a daily journal to keep track of all of their symptoms for 2 months. This helps to determine when the symptoms are occurring and the degree of severity.

However, a good intake can uncover stresses, exercise and sleep patterns. Blood work for thyroid and saliva tests for adrenal evaluation can be performed. Tests to measure gut bacteria and environmental toxicity can be performed. Hormone levels can be drawn for estrogens, progesterone, testosterone. Diet diaries are recorded to measure a woman's food intake.

Each woman is analyzed individually. Her AIMS physicians can decide which tests are beneficial for her specifically.

Treatment

Treatment of any woman suffering from PMS will entail addressing any and all of the etiological factors listed above. In general that consists of **cleaning up the diet, including promoting organic foods; promoting exercise; helping the liver; ensuring the thyroid, adrenals are working well;** using **nutritional supplements, herbal products and bioidentical progesterone;** we also aim to **improve a patient's gut function** to ensure proper elimination of hormones and increase serotonin levels. Serotonin, sometimes referred to as our happy neurotransmitter, has been shown to be low in some people with PMS, and more than half of our body's serotonin is made in the gut. This explains why having a healthy gut improves PMS especially when it relates to changes in mood.

Another important aspect of proper digestive function relates to **increasing good gut bacteria.** When there is an imbalance of gut flora and bad bacteria exists, it forms an enzyme called beta-glucuronidase. Normally when a toxin, or in this case excess estrogen, need to leave the body they bind to glucuronic acid. If beta-glucuronidase is present, it will break that bond allowing estrogen to recirculate in the body. The perpetual elevation of estrogen in the body can create and magnify the symptoms of PMS.

This in turn leads to more stress on the liver, which is another area we focus on when treating PMS. The liver's job is to filter the blood and detox the body. A healthy liver is very important in detoxifying and eliminating hormones. If the liver is sluggish or congested resulting from nutrient deficiencies, poor diet or environmental toxins, it is not able to perform its job optimally. Lipotropic herbs are often used to support and decongest the liver to promote proper function.

PMS can be a difficult aspect to a woman's life month after month. This does not have to be the case. The doctors at AIMS specialize in successfully treating many women's health concerns including PMS.