



condition

Premenstrual Syndrome

class

Women's Health

healthy tips

- + Try and eat three main meals a day with three smaller snacks in between
- + Cut down on sugary foods and salt
- + Eat plenty of fibre
- + Drink at least six to eight glasses of water or sugar-free drinks each day
- + Cut down on alcoholic drinks and avoid too much caffeine
- + Take up regular exercise
- + Try relaxation techniques

description

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is now widely recognised as a medical condition that affects many women. PMS describes a range of symptoms that occur before your period. PMS usually improves when your period starts.

causes

PMS is related to the fluctuations in the levels of female hormones that occur during a woman's monthly cycle.

symptoms

Symptoms of PMS and their severity can vary from person to person and even from month to month. Over 150 symptoms of PMS have been identified. Common physical symptoms include bloating, breast tenderness, **headaches**, weight gain, skin problems and fatigue. Women with PMS can also suffer from a variety of psychological problems such as poor concentration and mood swings. These can range from irritability and tearfulness to depression, aggression and feelings of being misunderstood. The symptoms of PMS can appear up to two weeks before a period is due and generally disappear or improve either on the first day of your period or after the day when the flow is heaviest. You should then be symptom-free for a significant time before your next period, although it could be noticeably if your menstrual cycle is very short. If you experience these symptoms throughout your menstrual cycle it is unlikely you have PMS and you should visit your doctor to discuss other possible causes.

treatment

The surest way to determine whether you are suffering from PMS is to keep a menstrual diary. Noting when symptoms occur often reveals a pattern consistent with PMS and can help you understand the problem better. Many women find that just knowing for certain they have PMS brings relief. Whatever your symptoms, all sufferers benefit from simple advice related to dietary changes, exercise, relaxation, **stress** avoidance and other lifestyle modifications. There are also a number of treatments that your doctor can prescribe to treat the symptoms of PMS, such as water tablets (diuretics) to relieve bloating, painkillers, antidepressants and hormonal drugs. Complementary medicine such as acupuncture and aromatherapy has also proved popular in managing the symptoms of PMS.

when to call a doctor

If symptoms are experienced throughout the cycle and do not disappear or significantly improve either on the first day of your period or after the day when the flow is heaviest, you should visit your doctor so a cause for the symptoms can be found. If you are uncertain whether you are suffering from PMS, you should complete a menstrual chart or diary outlining your symptoms for at least three consecutive months and show it to your doctor.

Based on information produced by: The National Association for Premenstrual Syndrome
Helpline: 0870 777 2177