

Ask Leyla: What can I do to help alleviate my PMS symptoms?



Q: Like many, I suffer from PMS symptoms and would like to manage them naturally as much as possible. Is there anything I can do to make the symptoms less severe, or prevent them altogether—or am I stuck taking the usual over-the-counter medications to find relief?

A: PMS is a common complaint among women—and sometimes their significant others! It typically occurs during the late luteal phase of the menstrual cycle—about a week before and into the first few days of menses. The range of symptoms vary and can include physical as well as emotional symptoms.

PMS is also experienced by hysterectomized women who retain ovarian function. The hormones secreted by the ovaries, after all, are still in play. Lack of menstruation doesn't preclude the symptoms of PMS.

Physical symptoms include headache—sometimes accompanied by nausea, breast tenderness or swelling, weight gain or feeling “bloating.” Some even experience joint or muscle pain.

Emotional symptoms may include moodiness such as suddenly feeling sad or tearful, or angry and irritable. Sometimes it's a marked feeling of anxiety or tension—feeling “edgy”. Many women are easily fatigued, have trouble concentrating or just lack energy.

There are also changes in appetite—this is where cravings can come into full swing. Some crave sugar, others salt, and the propensity to overeat is greater during this time. A poor diet will only exacerbate PMS symptoms because antinutrients such as sugar and white flour deplete B vitamins and magnesium—exactly what's needed to relieve symptoms. Blood sugar can also become unstable, exacerbating emotional lability.

While maintaining a diet higher in protein and essential fats and lower in carbohydrates will provide the best help in managing PMS, the following supplements are critical for many women in finding real relief:

- Chaste tree
- Jigsaw magnesium or magnesium citrate if also experiencing constipation
- Vitamin B-6
- Evening primrose oil or borage oil
- EPA/DHA

To your health!

Email your questions to questions@drhoffman.net