

Managing PMS: Diet and Nutrition



Maintaining a healthy diet helps your body counter PMS. Certain foods boost serotonin levels and give you the energy to cope with symptoms. Other foods can be avoided to ease symptoms.



About supplements

Ask your healthcare provider about supplements before trying them.

Benefits of a balanced diet

To counter PMS symptoms, maintain a balanced diet. Eat foods from all the food groups: dairy, grains, fruits and vegetables, and protein. When planning meals, know that:

- **Calcium** may ease mood swings, headache, bloating, and irritability. It's found in dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yogurt. Some juices, breads, cereals, and soy products have calcium added (fortified).
- **Magnesium** may relieve bloating and breast tenderness. It's found in many foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables. To help your body get enough magnesium, eat 5 or more servings of a variety of fruits and vegetables a day.
- **Vitamin B-6** helps the body use serotonin, thereby helping to ease depression. It's found in chicken, fish, potatoes, eggs, and carrots.

- **Vitamin E** may reduce headache and breast tenderness. It's found in nuts such as almonds, peanuts, and hazelnuts. It's also found in green leafy vegetables.

Good mood foods

Eating foods high in carbohydrates (carbs) and fiber can help you manage PMS. That's because carbs raise serotonin levels. Carbs are also your body's main source of energy. To help keep energy and serotonin levels steady, eat small amounts throughout the day. High-fiber carbs include:

- **Whole-grain foods.** Brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, whole-grain bread, and buckwheat noodles are good choices.
- **Fresh fruits and vegetables.** These are especially fiber-rich when eaten unpeeled.
- **Beans and legumes.** These include kidney beans, peas, and lentils.

Foods to limit

Some foods can make PMS symptoms worse. Know that:

- **Salt** can cause bloating. Since canned vegetables are often high in salt, buy fresh instead. Flavor with herbs, lemon, or salt-free seasonings.
- **Sugar** is a carb that provides only short bursts of energy. If you crave sugar, choose a food that's also high in fiber, like an unpeeled apple or a bran muffin.
- **Caffeine** can disrupt sleep, which makes symptoms harder to cope with. Caffeine can also cause breast tenderness. Try to limit chocolate and caffeinated drinks, such as coffee or soda.
- **Alcohol** can make you feel depressed and can disrupt sleep. Many kinds of alcohol are also high in sugar. You may try limiting the amount of alcohol you drink.

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