

Patient education: Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) (The Basics)

Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate

Please read the [Disclaimer](#) at the end of this page.

What are premenstrual syndrome and premenstrual dysphoric disorder?

Premenstrual syndrome ("PMS") is a group of symptoms that happens right before a person's monthly period. Many women get PMS, especially mild PMS.

When symptoms are severe, doctors call it premenstrual dysphoric disorder ("PMDD"). PMDD is not as common.

What are the symptoms of PMS and PMDD?

PMS and PMDD cause body symptoms as well as changes in mood. The most common symptoms are:

- Bloating
- Feeling tired, angry, or worried

Other symptoms can include:

- Mood swings
- Feeling sad or hopeless, or crying a lot
- Eating more than usual or craving certain foods
- Trouble concentrating
- Sleeping too much or having trouble sleeping
- Breast soreness or swelling
- Headaches

If symptoms are severe, it can lead to trouble at work, at school, or getting along with family and friends.

Get help right away if you are thinking of hurting or killing yourself!

Sometimes, people with PMDD think of hurting or killing themselves. If you ever feel like you might hurt yourself, help is available:

- In the US, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:
 - To speak to someone, call or text **988**.
 - To talk to someone online, go to www.988lifeline.org/chat.
- Call your doctor or nurse and tell them that it is an emergency.

- **Call for an ambulance** (in the US and Canada, call **9-1-1**).
 - Go to the emergency department at your local hospital.
-

Is there a test for PMS or PMDD?

No. There is no test. But your doctor or nurse should be able to tell if you have it by talking with you. They will ask you which symptoms you have and when you have them. To get this information, they might ask you to write down your symptoms each day for 2 monthly cycles.

To have PMS or PMDD, you must have symptoms that:

- Only happen 1 to 2 weeks before your period starts, and not during or right after your period
 - Affect both your body and mood
-

Is there anything I can do on my own to feel better?

Yes. To help feel better, you can:

- Get regular exercise – Exercise usually helps people feel less sad and worried. Even gentle forms of exercise, like walking, can help.
- Find ways to lower stress – For example, you can try yoga or relaxation exercises.
- Avoid salty foods and eating large meals, if you have bloating.
- Take an "NSAID" medicine to treat pain or headaches – NSAIDs are a group of medicines that includes [ibuprofen](#) (sample brand names: Advil, Motrin) and [naproxen](#) (sample brand name: Aleve).

You might hear or read about herbs or vitamins that can help improve PMS and PMDD. But doctors do not recommend most of these, because they have not been proven to work and could even cause harm. One herb, called "vitex agnus castus" or "chasteberry," might help with mild PMS symptoms. But it's important to talk to your doctor or nurse before you try this.

Can doctors treat PMS and PMDD with medicines?

Yes. Doctors can treat PMS and PMDD with different kinds of medicines. These include:

- A group of medicines called "SSRIs" – SSRIs include [sertraline](#) (brand name: Zoloft), [citalopram](#) (brand name: Celexa), [escitalopram](#) (brand name: Lexapro), and [fluoxetine](#) (sample brand names: Prozac). These medicines are also used to treat depression and anxiety (when people worry too much).
- Birth control pills – Some people find that their PMS and PMDD improve after they start taking birth control pills. There are different types of birth control pills. Some relieve symptoms better than others. If you want to prevent pregnancy, your doctor can talk to you about your options.

In addition to medicine, some people with PMDD find "cognitive behavioral therapy" ("CBT") helpful. In this type of therapy, you talk with a psychologist or counselor about the things that you think and do. Then, they help you

change how you see your situation and how you react to it. This teaches you how to cope better with your PMDD.

More on this topic

Patient education: Depression in adults (The Basics)

Patient education: Generalized anxiety disorder (The Basics)

Patient education: Menstruation (The Basics)

Patient education: Hormonal birth control (The Basics)

Patient education: Exercise and movement (The Basics)

Patient education: Medicines for depression (The Basics)

Patient education: Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) (Beyond the Basics)

Patient education: Depression in adults (Beyond the Basics)

Patient education: Depression treatment options for adults (Beyond the Basics)

Patient education: Hormonal methods of birth control (Beyond the Basics)

Patient education: Exercise (Beyond the Basics)

All topics are updated as new evidence becomes available and our [peer review process](#) is complete.

This topic retrieved from UpToDate on: Oct 06, 2023.

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms> ©2023 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

Topic 16161 Version 9.0

→