

Pre-Menstrual Syndrome

Why does May **get irritated** easily
over a few days every month?

Yes, my hands and feet often
swell a bit before a period !

Why do I often feel **breast
pain** and **swelling**
before a period?



Department of Health

Pre-Menstrual Syndrome or **PMS** is a common phenomenon. A local survey shows that in every 10 women, more than 6 experience certain symptoms of PMS before a period. Among them, about 3 to 8 women consider their symptoms to be serious.

What is **PMS**?

PMS refers to the periodic physical discomforts as well as psychological and behavioural changes in women before menstruation. **PMS is characterized by its occurrence one to two weeks before a period** and its natural disappearance soon after the start of menstrual bleeding. In serious cases, it may interfere with everyday work, daily life and interpersonal relationship, which in turn affect the quality of life.



What are the symptoms of **PMS**?

There could be as many as 150 PMS-related symptoms, and the common ones are listed below:

Physical symptoms:

- Breast swelling / tenderness
- Limb swelling / bloating
- Weight gain
- Headache
- Fatigue and systemic feebleness

Psychological and behavioural changes:

- Mood swings and irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- React / Behave impulsively
- Trouble sleeping, sleeplessness or sleepiness
- Change in appetite and food preference (a craving for high-sugar and high-fat food)

Where necessary, women suffering from pre-menstrual discomfort should consult a doctor and seek appropriate assistance.

Who gets PMS?

- Women prior to menopause may be subjected to the effects of PMS, and those aged between 25 and 45 are particularly vulnerable.
- To confirm a PMS case, it relies not on a one-time occurrence of symptoms or a single medical consultation. Before concluding a clinical diagnosis of PMS, a doctor would require a detailed record over a period of three consecutive months on the daily symptoms and their severity, followed by the elimination of possibility of other physical or psychological diseases on the basis of a complete medical history and body check. On suspicion of PMS, you should consult medical professionals for appropriate assessment and diagnosis, so as to obtain appropriate treatment.

Why does PMS happen?

Physical factors:

- Hormone imbalance
- Neurotransmitter imbalance

Psychological and social factors:

- Stress in everyday life, personal characters and attitudes towards life are relevant elements in PMS.
- Studies show that mental and psychological factors inter-relate with the severity of PMS since mental stress could affect endocrine responses.
- The various roles women play in modern society and family as well as the pressure they have to bear also contribute to PMS. Women leading less stressful lives and fulfilling various roles with ease and satisfaction would experience less frequent and less severe PMS symptoms. On the contrary, women suffering from conflicts in roles and associated dissatisfaction would have relatively higher frequency and severity in PMS symptoms.

How is PMS treated?

The treatment of PMS covers three aspects:

1. **Change in lifestyle** : you may try the following ways to allay PMS symptoms.

- **Exercise** - appropriate aerobic exercises, such as jogging, aerobic dance, climbing stairs and Tai Chi ; as well as stretching exercises, such as yoga and light stretching, help to promote blood circulation, muscle relaxation and a happy mind, thus relieving symptoms of PMS.

• **Diet** -

X Food to avoid	✓ Food to take
Caffeinated beverages, wine and alcoholic drinks	Cereal breakfast, wheat bread, oatmeal and corn
High-salt food: preserved food and sauce	Beans: soybean and other types of bean
Food made of processed sugar : ice-cream and chocolate	Vegetable: leafy vegetable and carrot
High-fat food and high-fat dairy products: butter and cheese	Nuts and dried fruits: cashews, peanuts and melon seeds

2. **Medication**: medicines prescribed by a doctor specifically for individual women. (Currently, there is no single drug that can relieve all the symptoms.)
3. **Psychological treatment**: including stress relief and relaxation training.



Family Health Service

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