



# ALL ABOUT YOUR PERIOD

## Premenstrual Syndrome, PMS

## Premenstrual Dysphoria Disorder, PMDD

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Do you struggle with your feelings every month? Do you have physical symptoms a few days before your period? Many people feel extra moody, irritable, or tired. They may also have a headache and feel bloated (swollen). If this describes you, you might have a menstrual condition called Premenstrual syndrome (PMS), or a more severe version called Premenstrual Dysphoria Disorder (PMDD) – *pronounced dis-for-ee-uh*. A health care provider can help you.

### What is PMS?

PMS is a group of symptoms you may have several days before your period. It usually gets better the first couple of days after you start your period.

Common symptoms include:

- Tiredness, bloating (swollen), pain in the breasts or chest, headaches
- Mood swings, anger, feeling irritated/annoyed, anxiety, depression, crying more than usual
- Food cravings, overeating
- Trouble concentrating

### What is PMDD?

PMDD is a more severe version of PMS. If you have PMDD, symptoms are severe in the week before your period. These symptoms are serious enough to affect school, work, and normal activities. They fade once your period starts.

Some symptoms may include:

- Tiredness
- Feeling irritated
- Less interest in activities you usually enjoy
- Bloating
- Crying more than usual
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Tender breasts
- Feeling anxious
- Trouble concentrating
- Food cravings

**Premenstrual dysphoria disorder** symptoms interfere with normal daily activities and your relationships. You may not feel well enough to go to school, you may not want to be with friends, or you may feel so hopeless you can't get out of bed. If symptoms do not go away within a couple of days, there may be other causes, such as depression.

It is important to talk to a health care provider about your symptoms and have a checkup. These are important steps toward feeling better.

### How do I talk to my health care provider about premenstrual syndrome/premenstrual dysphoria disorder?

Make an appointment and be prepared. Write down your symptoms each month, keeping track when they happen and how often. You can use a pen and paper or a calendar. Tell your health care provider about your symptoms. This will help them determine if you have PMS or PMDD.

**Note:** Your symptoms may be caused by something else, such as a thyroid or mood disorder. Your health care provider may want to do some tests.

### Does everyone have problems with their period?

At some time in their life, most people who get a period will have one or more PMS symptoms. However, only about 5% have symptoms that fit a PMS diagnosis. Only about 2% have PMDD.

Getting enough exercise and a healthy diet will help you feel better. Try these tips.

- Exercise. Include a calming exercise, such as yoga.
- Cut down on salty foods to decrease bloating.
- Get plenty of sleep to help your body relax and heal.
- Meditate to reduce stress.
- Cut down on caffeine to decrease feelings of stress and irritation.
- Eat high-calcium foods, such as cow's milk, yogurt, and calcium-fortified, plant-based milk and orange juice.
- Eat several small, healthy meals throughout the day instead of three large meals.

## How are premenstrual syndrome and premenstrual dysphoria disorder treated?

Your symptoms may keep you from doing normal activities, such as going to school or work. If so, your health care provider may recommend trying certain therapies or medicines.

- Cognitive behavioral therapy: This is a type of “talk” therapy. A counselor works with you to help you better understand and manage your thoughts and emotions.
- Birth control pills: Your health care provider can recommend the type of pill that is most likely to reduce PMS/PMDD symptoms.
- Antidepressant medicine: Antidepressants are medicines that help with depression. Some kinds may improve symptoms that affect your mood.
- Acupuncture: This is a form of traditional Chinese medicine. It may help with both physical and emotional symptoms.

## Need to find a health care provider?

Ask for help from a trusted adult, parent, guardian, or school nurse. If you or your family need health insurance, call New York State of Health at 1-855-355-5777.

This handout is part of the “All About Your Period” series on menstrual health. For more information and helpful resources, visit: <https://health.ny.gov/TeenHealth>.