Premenstrual Syndrome and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder

What is premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder?

- Most women feel physical or mood changes during the days before their menstrual period. When these changes affect normal life, they are known as PMS.
- An extreme or more severe form of PMS is called premenstrual dysphoric disorder.
- You may experience hormonal shifts during your menstrual periods that may result in mood swings, headaches, fatigue, bloating, acne, breast soreness, food cravings, thirst, diarrhea, or nausea.
- You may have some or none of these symptoms, and how you feel may vary from month to month.

What causes PMS and premenstrual dysphoric disorder?

- Scientists and physicians are still trying to determine the exact cause of these menstrual disorders because many teens experience a variety of symptoms.
- There is no question, however, that it is associated with the body's hormonal shifts.
- Even though a definite cause is unknown, there are things that you can do to control the symptoms.

Do you need treatment if you have PMS or premenstrual dysphoric disorder with your menstrual periods?

- You may experience mild symptoms that require no treatment.
- If your symptoms stop you from doing your daily activities, you may want to get your doctor's advice.

What will the doctor do for PMS and premenstrual dysphoric disorder?

- The doctor will ask questions about your menstrual periods and listen to your concerns.
- The doctor will need to know about any medical problems you may have.
- The doctor may perform a pelvic examination, but this may not always be necessary. If you are sexually active, a pregnancy test may be performed in addition to screening for infections.
- The doctor will encourage you to eat healthy, avoid salty foods, exercise, get plenty of rest, avoid stress, and avoid caffeinated beverages or foods. Calcium also has been shown to be helpful.
- If symptoms do not go away with common methods, your doctor may suggest an oral contraceptive pill, patch, ring, or injection to reduce the symptoms that bother you during your menstrual period and to reduce how often you get your menstrual periods.

For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Telephone: (202) 638-5577 or (800) 673-8444
Web: www.acog.org

AWARE Foundation
Telephone: (215) 955-9847
Web: www.awarefoundation.org

Center for Young Women's Health
Telephone: (617) 355- 2994
Web: www.youngwomenshealth.org

Go Ask Alice
Telephone (212) 854-5453
http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada
Telephone: (800) 561-2416 or (613) 730-4192
Web: http://sogc.medical.org/index_e.asp
Web: www.sexualityandu.ca/home_e.aspx

TeensHealth
Nemours Foundation
Telephone: (904) 232-4100
Web: Coping with common period problems: www.teenhealth.org/teen/sexual_health/girls/menstrual_problems.html

Prepared by the ACOG Committee on Adolescent Health Care. For more information, e-mail adolhlth@acog.org.
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