

# Healing PMS Naturally

## What is premenstrual syndrome (PMS)?

PMS is a group of symptoms that many women experience in the 7-10 days before their menstrual period. Women may experience physical symptoms such as cramps, bloating, breast tenderness, acne, headaches or migraines, as well as emotional or mood-related symptoms, such as feelings of weepiness, depression, increased tension or irritability. You may have difficulty concentrating; crave certain foods like chocolate, sugar, alcohol or coffee; or you may experience changes in your sleep patterns. PMS symptoms typically get better soon after your period starts.

The good news is that *PMS is treatable*. If your PMS symptoms interfere with your ability to enjoy your activities or relationships, consult your naturopathic doctor to discuss the many natural, effective treatment options that are available to you. These may include dietary modifications, herbal medicine, acupuncture, homeopathy and physical treatments. We will work together to understand your experience of PMS, and identify and remove the *underlying causes* of your symptoms. In this way, your naturopathic treatment will provide both short-term and lasting relief from the suffering of PMS. Remember, although PMS is common, it is not “normal” – meaning that menstrual-related difficulties represent *imbalances in the body* that can be corrected with gentle, naturopathic therapies, and there is no need to endure troubling PMS symptoms every month. From a naturopathic perspective, girls and women who are optimally healthy will experience only *mild or no PMS symptoms* each month. That’s right – it is possible to have a PMS-free life!

## What can I expect when I see my naturopathic doctor (ND)?

Your ND will ask you about your menstrual cycles and how you feel at different times during your cycle and will perform an indicated physical examination. She may have you keep a record of your cycle and symptoms. She may recommend that you have certain lab studies, such as an abdominal or pelvic ultrasound or blood work done. Your ND will provide you with an individualized plan to help you with your PMS



symptoms and will monitor your progress at each follow-up visit. Keep your ND informed of any changes that you experience with your menstrual cycle, if you become or think you may be pregnant. We also recognize that premenstrual dysthymic disorder is a serious condition and encourage you to contact your ND, MD or other health care practitioner right away if you start feeling more depressed or having thoughts of suicide.

### TIPS for a Healthier Period

- Increase intake of fresh fruits and vegetables and healthy fats like omega-3 fish oils and cold water fish, hemp seeds and ground flax seeds to decrease inflammation that contributes to cramps, acne, headaches.
- Add a few teaspoons of freshly ground flax seed to a smoothie or cereal – these are a source of fibre and phytoestrogens, which combat excess estrogen levels in the body
- Reduce your intake of inflammatory foods like fried vegetable oils, peanut oil, trans fats, coffee, sugar and refined carbs like white flour products, which can increase inflammation and pain
- Iron deficiency can worsen menstrual cramps and fatigue. Include iron-rich foods, like grass-fed beef, free-run poultry, blackstrap molasses, dark green vegetables, raisins and use cast iron cookware to optimize your iron stores
- Keep hydrated with at least 8 glasses (2 litres) pure water daily, and eliminate caffeine and alcohol which are dehydrating and contribute to breast tenderness
- Get enough sleep, exercise and rest, especially during the week before your period

### Where can I get more information?

Contact your ND with any questions that you may have about ways to treat PMS or other women's health concerns. We are here to help.

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