

What is Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

It is a collection of various symptoms that occur during the second half of the menstrual cycle. These symptoms can be both physical and psychological.

What can we do for you?

- Take a detailed medical history
- Discuss your current lifestyle and suggest changes
- Advise on dietary changes
- If your symptoms are primarily physical then we may prescribe some hormone treatment
- If your symptoms are more psychological we may consider an anti depressant medication or refer you for counselling

What are the symptoms?

There are a large number of symptoms. Most women will be able to identify some of these symptoms which relate to them specifically. Nearly all women will be aware of some physical/psychological changes occurring.

- Irritability
- Aggression
- Anxiety
- Exhaustion
- Headaches and migraines
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Backache
- Abdominal bloating and fluid retention
- Pelvic pain
- Breast pain

The symptoms may often become gradually more severe as you age. Although even without treatment, symptoms will tend to decrease in women approaching the menopause and disappear totally in menopausal women. Studies have shown that only a small percentage of women (2% to 5%) have significant PMS symptoms above and beyond the usual changes/discomfort suffered by menstruating women.

□ How does it occur?

The exact cause is not known. Several studies have been carried out but their results have been inconclusive. Consequently doctors have been unable to create a diagnostic test which can identify the condition. It is generally believed that normal hormonal changes that occur as part of your cycle must contribute to the condition.

What you can do for yourself?

By reviewing your current lifestyle it may be possible to identify certain changes to your lifestyle that can be made to reduce your level of PMS.

- Many people now lead very stressful lives. You should attempt to identify the area of your life that are causing stress and see if any changes can be made to alleviate these levels.
- Regular exercise has been shown to help both the physical and psychological causes of PMS.
- A good balanced diet will help improve your overall health and hopefully reduce your levels of PMS. In particular a low glycaemic index (GI) diet is recommended, as the slow release of sugars from low GI foods helps to combat the fluctuating blood sugar levels associated with PMS.
- Certain anti-inflammatory drugs may be taken to alleviate physical pain. However these should only be taken after consultation with your doctor.

The Pill

The combined contraceptive pill is commonly used as the first line of treatment for PMS. Although it does not help every woman, it can be very effective. It works by suppressing the often erratic production of hormones from the ovaries and providing a constant steady level of female hormones released by the pill. In particular preparations which shorten the pill free interval such as Yaz can be very helpful.

Anti Depressant Medication

Medical studies have shown that certain types of anti-depressant medication {selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's)} have been successful in treating women who suffer from

severe psychological symptoms for prolonged periods of time. These can be used either constantly throughout the month or just for the second half of the menstrual cycle, when the symptoms are most marked.