



## PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME

More women have committed crimes, lost their jobs, had accidents, and made serious mistakes when they were premenstrual. Husbands and families usually know it's "that time of the month".

When you consider that around 75% (in some studies higher) of women in the child bearing age group get symptoms of PMS, this is a condition that has a major effect on quality of life and productivity. 10% of women get this condition very severely.

There are numerous theories about what causes PMS and they have included imbalances of vitamins, hormones and brain chemistry. In these stressful times, I have observed women's PMS tends to get more severe. In addition, the condition premenstrual dysphoric disorder is a specifically severe form of PMS that only includes severe psychological symptoms that significantly interfere with life and work.

The symptoms that can be suffered in PMS include breast swelling and tenderness, abdominal bloating, weight gain, mood swings, depression, anxiety, rashes, food cravings, headache and migraine, inability to concentrate or function properly.

The women at most risk are those with high stress, painful periods and a personal or family history of mental illness, depression or anxiety. I believe that the reason stress makes PMS worse is that stress puts pressure on the brain chemistry and the body's hormones and further depletes them, thus making the person more prone to PMS.

### **Treatments that can help PMS are listed below:**

1. Get enough sleep at the right time. Be in bed and asleep before 10:30pm and try to get eight hours.
2. Regular exercise.
3. Diet – no alcohol or caffeine and reduce sugar, starches and carbohydrates from the diet.
4. Stress reduction and relaxation techniques.
5. Get counselling and support. For a busy working woman, this may mean a housekeeper.
6. Nutritional supplements can include Evening Primrose Oil, vitamin B6, magnesium, calcium, tryptophan to help sleep and vitamin E.
7. Herbs can include St Johns Wort – however, be aware that you cannot take this as well as antidepressants. Vitex or chast tree berry can be useful in days 17-28 of your cycle.
8. Bioidentical progesterone has been found useful.
9. Drugs like Prozac are considered the first line of treatment in the western medical world. In some people the contraceptive pill can be useful, as well as diuretics, hormone controlling drugs and pain killers.