



PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC DISORDER (PMDD): GETTING HELP

What is PMDD?

PMDD is a severe form of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), a disorder characterized by bothersome symptoms in the week or two before menstruation. Between 2 and 10 percent of women of childbearing age have PMDD.

How do I know if I have PMDD?

The symptoms of PMDD include sadness and crying, feeling nervous, anxious and irritable, strong cravings for certain foods, difficulty concentrating, trouble sleeping, breast tenderness, headaches, joint or muscle pain, and swelling or bloating. If you have PMDD, your symptoms are severe enough to interfere with your work and/or personal life.

What causes PMDD?

The cause of PMDD is not known. Changes in female hormones over the menstrual cycle, as well as stressful life events and a family history of PMS/PMDD, may play a role.

How does my doctor find out if I have PMDD?

There is no test for diagnosing PMDD. Your doctor can diagnose the disorder by asking you about your symptoms and how they relate to your menstrual cycle. You may be asked to fill out a symptom chart for several weeks.

How is PMDD treated?

For less severe symptoms, your doctor may suggest diet or lifestyle changes. Severe symptoms may be relieved by medication, and psychotherapy/counseling may also help. Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), which are also used to treat depression, can improve your mood and relieve your anxiety by boosting the effect of a brain chemical called serotonin. Taking these medications does not mean you have depression.

**BE SURE TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR
BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO TREAT YOURSELF FOR PMDD.**

Adapted from:

Bhatia SC, Bhatia SK. Information from your family doctor: premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD). *American Family Physician* 2002;66:7.

Additional information is available on the internet:

www.patients.upToDate.com > Women's health issues > Menstrual cycle

