



Many people who menstruate have a range of physical and emotional signs that usually start about a week before their period begins. Some people call this premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

Body changes:

- » bloating
- » swollen breasts
- » tender breasts
- » increased sex drive
- » feeling tired
- » abdominal cramps
- » low back pain
- » more energy
- » appetite changes
- » acne
- » trouble sleeping
- » hot flashes
- » headaches

Feelings:

- » increased interest
- » feeling sad or overwhelmed
- » emotional connection
- » more relaxed
- » more loving
- » more confident
- » anxiety
- » grouchy
- » creative
- » anger
- » trouble concentrating
- » trouble remembering

For many, these signs are a normal part of the menstrual cycle and do not interfere with their life. For some, these signs get stronger closer to menopause. Some people say they feel more creative and in tune with their body between ovulation and the start of their period.

What is the cause?

There is no known cause. Some think these are due to hormone changes, but there isn't strong evidence to support this.

To reduce discomforts:

Body changes and mood changes are a normal part of the menstrual cycle. It is important to be kind to yourself. Lifestyle changes may help reduce relatively mild or moderate discomforts:

- » be active
- » eat a variety of foods, especially complex carbohydrates such as whole grain products and legumes
- » get enough sleep
- » do relaxing activities like yoga
- » reduce salt, sugar, caffeine and alcohol
- » birth control pills
- » anti-inflammatory drugs (ex: Naproxen) for cramps or headaches.
- » some anti-depressants may help with severe mood changes
- » take vitamin B6 (no more than 100 mgs daily)

It may take a few months before you feel improvement.

Some people (1-3%) have a cycle of severe discomforts that begins before their period starts and go away when it ends. These can be severe enough to keep people from their daily lives. This is sometimes called Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder.

If you struggle with discomforts before or during your period, keep track of them for a few months, and then talk with your health care provider.

Talk to your health care provider or a pharmacist before you take any medication to be sure it doesn't interact with other medications or health conditions. This includes vitamins, minerals and herbal treatments.

Helpful websites:

<https://hellocue.com/articles/cycle-a-z/positive-symptoms-pms>

<https://www.yourperiod.ca/abnormal-pain-and-menstrual-bleeding/premenstrual-syndrome-pms/>

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/hw139439>

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