

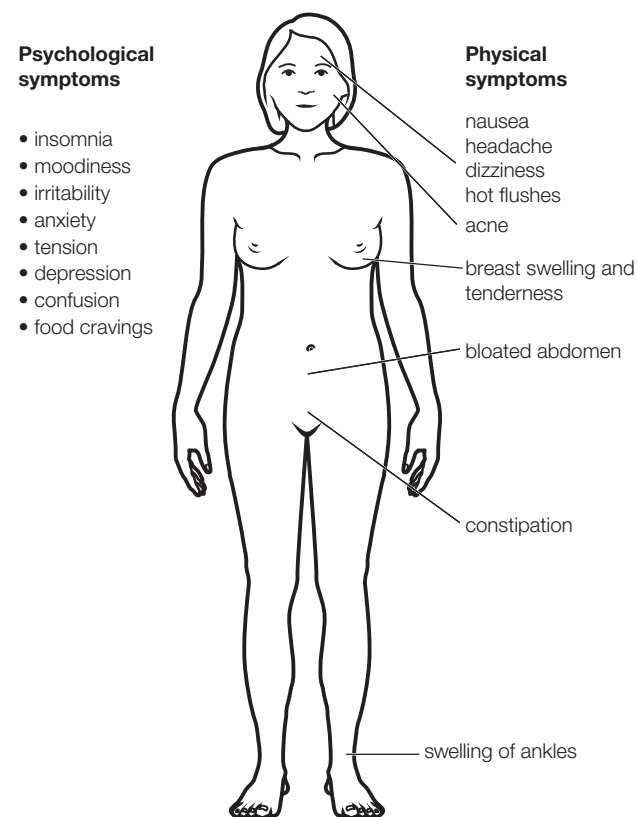
# Premenstrual syndrome

## What is premenstrual syndrome?

*Premenstrual syndrome*, commonly called *premenstrual tension* or *PMT*, is a set of symptoms, both physical and psychological, that some women experience before their periods. These symptoms usually go away when the period starts. The symptoms are caused by hormonal changes in the body before the period and vary from woman to woman. The build-up of fluid in the body at this time is an example of this.

## Is it common?

Yes; possibly up to 90% of women experience some symptoms, which can vary from minor to severe. PMT tends to increase with age.



Symptoms of premenstrual tension

## What are the symptoms?

The important symptoms are summarised in the diagram, but the most common symptoms are moodiness, irritability, tension, headache, constipation, sore breasts and bloated feelings.

## What can be done about these symptoms?

### Insight

Understanding your symptoms and why they occur can be a big help. It is helpful to be open about your problem and tell your family and close friends about these symptoms. Consider joining a support group.

### Keep a diary

Keep a list of your main symptoms and note when they occur over a 2 to 3 month period. Use this information to help plan around your symptoms; for example, avoid too many social events and postpone demanding business appointments.

### Lifestyle changes

- **Diet.** Eat regularly and sensibly: eat small rather than large meals; avoid excess salt, caffeine and fluids. If necessary, reduce your weight to an ideal level.
- **Exercise.** Regular exercise often helps (e.g. swimming, aerobics, tennis).
- **Relaxation.** Plan to do things that you find relaxing and enjoyable during this time. Stress aggravates PMT, so reduce it wherever possible.
- **Proper dress.** Sensible dressing to cope with breast tenderness and a bloated abdomen is useful (e.g. a firm-fitting bra and loose-fitting clothes around the abdomen).
- **Medicine.** Some medicines may help those with more severe symptoms, so discuss these options with your doctor. Examples of proven treatment used for premenstrual tension include vitamin B6 (pyridoxine), chaste tree (*vitex agnus castus*) and certain antidepressant agents. It is worth taking pyridoxine 100 mg daily for 6 months. If PMT persists discuss it with your doctor. Your doctor may prescribe antidepressant medication for more severe PMT.