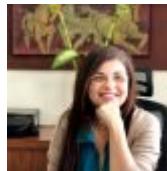


Best and Worst Foods to Fight PMS



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Are the foods you are turning to for comfort inadvertently making you jumpy, edgy and ultimately irritable?



Pre-Menstrual Syndrome or PMS is often synonymous with words like 'grouchy', 'cranky' and 'weepy'. Physically, too, this is a trying time for women due to bloating, physical tenderness and cramps, frequently accompanied by nausea and headaches. The emotional vulnerability often makes women turn to comfort foods like coffee, tea, pizza, pasta, ice-cream, chocolate and other sugary products.

These may, initially, give us the illusion of feeling better, but in fact increase the bloat, and spike emotional sensitivity.

Food plays a very important role in PMS. Here are some foods to avoid; they increase bloating as the body is unable to digest them in this period of expulsion:

- Salty and sugary foods
- Chocolate
- Tea and coffee
- Alcohol
- Red meat, dairy and fatty foods



Instead, turn to **fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, fish and chicken**. **Broccoli, spinach, kale, arugula and rocket** are very good, as are **beans** eaten in small quantities. You can accompany these with **yogurt, low-fat cheese and buttermilk**. How does a cooling and soothing **fruit and yogurt parfait** sound? Or a **lightly pan fried fish with an olive oil-lemon-mint-basil dressing**, accompanied by **sautéed carrots, broccoli and blanched spinach**? This makes a delightful meal that digests easily, and gives you the required energy.

Rye bread, oats and red rice are terrific sponges for that overflow of emotions. Drink plenty of water and several cups of green tea, as this is a safe and sure way to eliminate emotional and physical toxins.

Our ancestors were cognizant of the body's need for rest, this being a period of energetic 'death and rebirth'. Menstruation was recognised as a divine gift bestowed upon women so that they could release deeply embedded negative energy from the human psyche.

While I certainly do not suggest that we stop working or being active during this sensitive time, I do advocate facilitating the process rather than resorting to painkillers and hormone supplements, unless absolutely necessary. Though, over 80% of women suffer with PMS, not everyone needs to turn to medication. In fact, there are natural ways that help to alleviate some of the more challenging symptoms.

How best can this be done? Here are some suggestions:

- The most important need of the body is rest. Keep this in mind, and work your days around it.
- Do not burn the candle at both ends.
- Use relaxation methods like music, yoga, aroma therapy, deep breathing, spa treatments and gentle massages.
- Gentle water aerobics, Tai Chi and Sufi Whirling are very helpful in maintaining the delicate inner balance.
- Evening Primrose Oil has been found to be effective in helping with emotional calm.
- Bach Flower Remedies like Rock Water, Mustard, Holly, Scleranthus, Impatiens and Willow are not only beneficial, but also natural and non-toxic ways of fighting PMS symptoms.
- Test for deficiencies in Magnesium, Potassium, Calcium, Iron and Vitamins B and D as a loss of these in the body amplify PMS symptoms.



Do not suppress the emotions that come up. The more you deny these, the stronger shall be the PMS symptoms. Find healthy ways of expressing them so that they do not interfere with your relationships. Writing is a great way of doing this. Meet your best friend and vent over a mint and strawberry slush.

It is a myth that exercise should be avoided during menstruation. Yes, strenuous and rigorous exercise is not recommended as the body may be easily fatigued during this time, but an hour of swimming, a nature walk or dancing are excellent de-stressors, and keep those raw emotions at bay. They are also an excellent aid for peaceful sleep, which effectively maintains emotional balance. Someone joked with me once, 'I'm sure S in PMS stands for Satan!' I like to think, though, that it stands for Sensitivity – the cornerstone of being joyously feminine.