

THE PMDD PROJECT

EXERCISE & PMDD

When you're in the luteal phase, moving your body might feel like the last thing you want to do. But even small amounts of gentle exercise can work wonders on your mood, energy, and overall wellbeing.

The goal isn't to push yourself to the limit - it's to nurture your body with movements that feel good.

Here are some ways exercise can support you through PMDD and how to get started:

Boost your mood with movement

Exercise naturally increases endorphins – those “feel-good” chemicals in your brain that help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.



The great news?

You don't need an intense workout to feel the benefits. Simple, gentle movements can be just as effective:

Walking: A 10-20 minute walk in nature or around your neighbourhood can elevate your mood, clear your mind, and ease tension.

Stretching: Take 5 minutes to stretch your body, focusing on areas that feel tight. Gentle stretches can help relieve muscle tension and improve circulation.

Yoga & mind-body connection

Yoga is a gentle, restorative practice that combines movement and mindfulness. It can help reduce PMDD symptoms like irritability, anxiety, and fatigue by calming both your body and mind.



Try a gentle yoga flow focusing on deep breathing and slow, intentional movements. Even a few poses, like Child's Pose, can provide immediate relief.

Restorative yoga is perfect if you're feeling low on energy - it's all about relaxing into the poses without pushing your body.

Release tension with low-impact workouts

Low-impact exercises are great for people with PMDD because they provide all the benefits of movement without placing too much strain on your body.



Swimming or water aerobics can be incredibly soothing on tired muscles while helping you stay active.

Pilates strengthens your core and improves flexibility, making you feel more grounded and in control.

Dance it out

Sometimes the best way to shake off stress is to literally shake it off! Dancing, whether it's in your living room or at a class, can lift your spirits, boost energy, and release pent-up emotions.

Create a playlist of your favourite feel-good songs, and let yourself move however feels right – no judgement, just fun.



Listen to your body

There will be days when rest is the best form of self-care. PMDD often comes with fatigue and pain, and sometimes the kindest thing you can do is allow your body to rest.

It's okay to skip a workout or opt for something really gentle, like:

A **calming breathing exercise** or short meditation.

Light stretching in bed or on the couch – every bit counts!



Make it social (or not!)

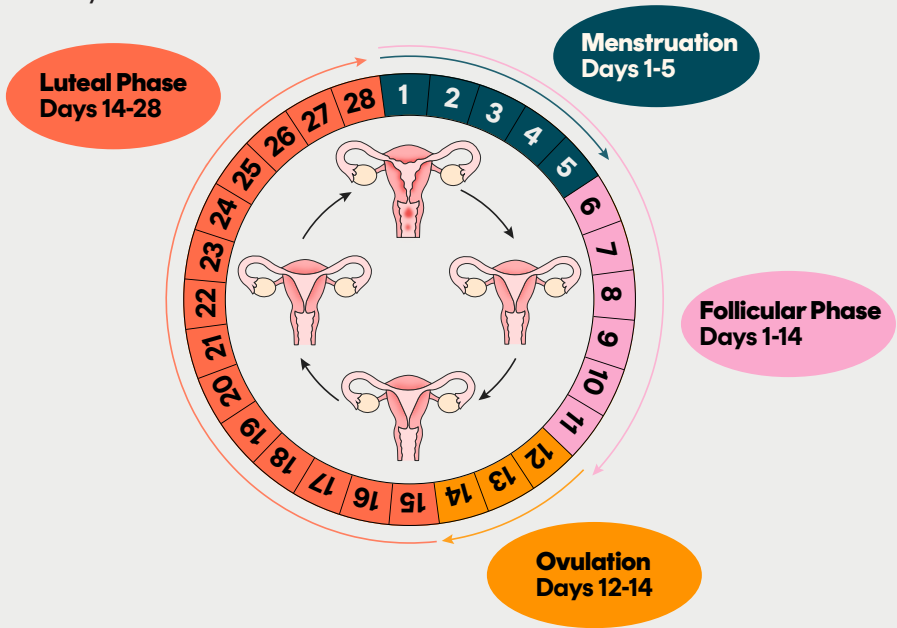
If you enjoy exercising with others, invite a friend or join a low-pressure group activity. Having someone with you can make it feel more fun and keep you motivated.

If you prefer some alone time, there are plenty of online classes or videos available - find a routine that suits your mood and energy levels.



WORKING WITH YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE: WHEN TO PUSH AND WHEN TO REST

Your menstrual cycle has four distinct phases, each bringing its own set of energy levels and physical needs. By working with your cycle instead of against it, you can maximise your workouts while honouring your body's natural rhythms.



Menstrual Phase (Days 1-5*):

Rest & Recovery

This is when your period begins, and energy levels might be at their lowest. It's a time for rest and recovery.

Best exercises: Focus on gentle movements, like stretching, restorative yoga, and walking. These can help ease menstrual cramps and reduce bloating without straining your body.

Don't push yourself too hard - this is your body's natural time to rest, so listen to what you need. If you're not feeling up to it, it's perfectly fine to take a break.

Follicular Phase (Days 6-14*):

Build Strength and Endurance

As your period ends and your energy returns, estrogen levels rise, making you feel more energetic and motivated. This is the ideal time to push yourself a little more.

Best exercises: Focus on strength training, HIIT, or cardio like running or cycling. Your body is primed for building muscle and increasing endurance during this phase.

Set new fitness goals, try new activities, or lift heavier weights – you'll likely feel stronger and more capable.

Ovulation Phase (Days 14-17*):

High Energy & Peak Performance

Ovulation is the peak of your cycle, with high energy and confidence levels thanks to surging hormones. This is a great time to maximise your performance.

Best exercises: Continue with higher-intensity workouts like circuit training, interval running, or more intense strength sessions. You may also find you enjoy group activities more during this phase, so try a fitness class or team sport.

Enjoy this time of peak energy and capitalise on your body's natural strength.

Luteal Phase (Days 18-28*):

Slow It Down & Be Gentle

As you move into the luteal phase, progesterone levels rise, and your energy may begin to drop, especially as PMDD symptoms set in. This is a time to slow down and focus on more restorative exercises.

Best exercises: Focus on light aerobic activities like walking, swimming, or easy cycling. Yoga, Pilates, and stretching can also help with tension, bloating, and mood regulation.

Be kind to yourself – this is not the time for intense workouts. Listen to your body and honour your needs for rest and gentler movements.

***Disclaimer: Everyone's menstrual cycle is unique, and not all cycles last exactly 28 days.**

The information provided in this resource is meant to offer general guidance, but it's important to remember that your cycle length and phases may vary. Some cycles may be shorter or longer, and the intensity of symptoms and energy levels can differ from person to person.

Always listen to your body and consult with a healthcare professional to tailor any advice to your individual needs.

Remember: Exercise doesn't have to be intense to be effective. By tailoring your workouts to the different phases of your menstrual cycle, you can support your body's changing needs and make the most of each phase.

Start where you are, and let movement be a way to take care of yourself.

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