

THE PMDD PROJECT

**NAVIGATING PMDD TREATMENT OPTIONS:
A GUIDE TO FINDING RELIEF**

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) affects mental, emotional and physical health during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle.

While PMDD can feel overwhelming, there are many treatment options available to help manage symptoms and improve quality of life.

This guide will walk you through different types of treatments – from lifestyle changes to medical interventions – so you can explore what might work best for you.

TYPES OF TREATMENT

Lifestyle changes

Small, sustainable lifestyle changes can have a big impact on PMDD symptoms. These treatments often focus on nutrition, physical activity, and stress management.

Exercise:



Regular physical activity can help reduce mood swings, anxiety, and fatigue⁽¹⁾.

Aim for moderate aerobic exercise, such as walking, swimming, or cycling, for at least 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week.

Sleep:

Maintaining good sleep hygiene, including a consistent bedtime and creating a relaxing environment, is crucial for managing PMDD symptoms.



Diet:



A balanced diet can help stabilise mood, energy and blood sugar across the day⁽²⁾. Focus on whole foods rich in fibre, complex carbs, lean proteins and healthy fats, and limit sugar, caffeine and alcohol, which can worsen symptom⁽³⁾.

Stress management:

Mindfulness practices such as meditation, deep breathing, and yoga can help manage stress and alleviate anxiety.



Journaling or creating outlets can also be effective ways to process emotions.



Nutritional supplements

Certain vitamins and minerals can help reduce the severity of PMDD symptoms⁽⁴⁾. These are best used under the guidance of a healthcare provider.

Calcium:

Studies suggest that calcium supplements (1,000 mg/day) can help reduce mood swings, depression, and fatigue⁽⁵⁾.



Magnesium:

Taking magnesium (200-400mg/day) may help with irritability, anxiety, and bloating. Magnesium glycinate in particular is highly recommended by healthcare professionals for PMDD⁽⁶⁾.



Vitamin B6:

B6 (50mg/day) has been shown to alleviate mood-related symptoms⁽⁶⁾.



Vitamin D:

Helps regulate mood, inflammation, and how the brain responds to stress and hormones.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids:

Found in fish oil, omega-3 can help improve mood and reduce inflammation⁽⁶⁾.



Therapy and Counselling

Emotional support and coping strategies can play a big role in managing the mental health aspects of PMDD.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):

CBT is a structured form of therapy that focuses on changing negative thought patterns and behaviours. It's been shown to be effective in treating the mood-related symptoms of PMDD⁽⁸⁾.



Rapid Transformational Therapy (RTT):

Some people with PMDD find success with RTT, a form of hypnotherapy that targets trauma and deep-seated beliefs contributing to emotional distress⁽⁹⁾.



Support groups:

Connecting with others who understand PMDD can provide comfort and coping strategies.

Online forums or local support groups can offer a sense of community.



Medications

Medication can be a helpful option for those whose PMDD symptoms severely disrupt daily life. These should always be discussed with a healthcare professional to ensure the right treatment plan is tailored to your needs.

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs):



SSRIs are commonly prescribed for PMDD to help regulate mood.

They are typically taken during the luteal phase (around two weeks before menstruation) or continuously.

Pain relief medications:



Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen can help with PMDD-related pain and discomfort.

Hormonal treatments:

Since PMDD is hormone-based, regulating hormones can help. Options include:

Combined Oral Contraceptives (COCs):

Some birth control pills may help manage PMDD symptoms by suppressing ovulation and stabilising hormone levels⁽¹⁰⁾. Eloine/drospirenone-containing pills have better evidence for PMDD⁽¹¹⁾.

HRT:

For some, using hormone therapy to calm or switch off the menstrual cycle can reduce symptoms⁽¹²⁾. This usually involves higher-dose oestrogen alongside progesterone for womb protection.

GnRH Agonists:

These medications stop the production of estrogen and progesterone, inducing a temporary menopausal state, which may alleviate PMDD symptoms. They're often considered a last-resort option due to potential side effects. HRT is always needed alongside this to protect bone health and reduce side effects⁽¹³⁾.

Surgical options

In extreme cases, where other treatments have failed, surgery may be considered.

Hysterectomy with Bilateral Oophorectomy:

This involves the removal of the uterus and ovaries, which eliminates the hormonal fluctuations that trigger PMDD. This is considered a last resort and is only recommended after careful consideration with healthcare providers.

Alternative and complementary therapies:

Some people find relief from PMDD symptoms using alternative therapies. These treatments should be used in conjunction with, not as a replacement for, medical advice.

Acupuncture:

Acupuncture is thought to help regulate energy and reduce stress, potentially easing PMDD symptoms.



Light therapy:

For those whose symptoms are tied to mood disorders, light therapy (often used for Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD) may help by increasing serotonin production.



Herbal supplements:

Some herbs such as chaste berry (vitex), are traditionally used to help balance hormones and alleviate symptoms. Always consult with a healthcare provider before taking herbal supplements, as they can interact with other medications.



FINDING THE RIGHT TREATMENT FOR YOU

It's important to remember that there's no one-size-fits-all solution for PMDD.

What works for one person may not work for another, so it may take some time to find the right combination of treatments for you. Start by speaking with your healthcare provider, tracking your symptoms, and trying different approaches to see what provides the most relief.

Managing PMDD can feel daunting, but with the right tools and support, relief is possible. Whether through lifestyle changes, medication, therapy, or a combination of treatments, there are ways to reduce the impact of PMDD on your life.

Don't hesitate to seek professional help and explore the options that work best for you.

SOURCES

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