



Managing Work with PMDD

Clinical Review Statement

This resource has been developed by The PMDD Project and reviewed by our Clinical Advisory Board for clinical accuracy and alignment with current evidence and guidelines.

Version: 1.2

Last reviewed: June 2026

Next scheduled review: December 2026

Reviewed by: The PMDD Project Clinical Advisory Board

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) can make managing work challenging, especially during the luteal phase when symptoms like anxiety, fatigue, brain fog, and irritability may be at their worst. However, with the right strategies, you can maintain your productivity, manage stress, and seek the support you need from your employer.

This guide offers practical tips on how to manage your workload while navigating PMDD, how to talk to your employer about your condition, and ways to reduce work-related stress.

Understanding *how PMDD affects work*

PMDD symptoms often appear 1-2 weeks before menstruation and can significantly affect your ability to focus, interact with colleagues, and complete tasks.

Common symptoms that impact work include:

Emotional:

Depression, anxiety, irritability, & mood swings



Physical:

Fatigue, headaches, and joint pain



Cognitive:

Difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, & brain fog



Managing PMDD at work means finding a balance between taking care of yourself and meeting professional demands.

Tracking your symptoms and understanding how they align with your cycle can help you predict when your PMDD will be at its worst and plan your work accordingly.

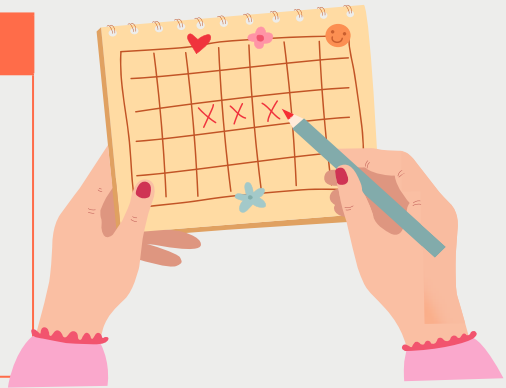
Managing your workload with PMDD

Here are some practical strategies to help manage your workload and stay on top of tasks, even during more symptomatic phases:

Track your cycle and symptoms

Use a period tracker to monitor your cycle and predict when your PMDD symptoms are likely to flare.

This will allow you to plan your workloads around the times you feel your best and make adjustments during more difficult phases.



Prioritise tasks

During your luteal phase, focus on high-priority tasks and break down larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps.

Consider creating a to-do list that separates essential tasks from those that can be postponed or delegated.

Plan ahead

If possible, schedule meetings, presentations, or high-focus tasks for the part of your cycle when you feel most energetic and focused (*usually during the follicular phase, right after your period*).

Take regular breaks

Fatigue and brain fog can make it hard to stay productive for long periods.

Allow yourself short, frequent breaks to rest, stretch, or go for a quick walk to reset your energy.

Practice self-care during the work day

Incorporate stress-relief practices into your work day, such as mindfulness exercises, deep breathing, or short meditation sessions.

These can help reduce stress and improve your focus.

How to talk to your employer about PMDD

Talking to your employer about PMDD can feel intimidating, but being open about your condition can help you receive the support and adjustments you need to succeed at work.

Here’s how to approach the conversation:

Decide whether to disclose:	
You’re not obliged to disclose your PMDD diagnosis, but if it’s significantly affecting your work, it may be helpful to have an open conversation with your manager or HR. Depending on your job, disclosure can also affect your employer’s risk assessments and liability insurance, which may make it easier for them to put formal support and adjustments in place.	You may be referred to your workplace occupational health department for a workplace assessment. Occupational health can help recommend adjustments and may also offer support around stress, fatigue, and mental health.
Plan the conversation:	Explain PMDD simply:
Before speaking with your employer, think about how to explain PMDD in a way that focuses on how it affects your work performance. Be prepared to discuss potential solutions and adjustments that would help.	PMDD is a cyclical condition linked to the menstrual cycle, causing severe emotional and physical symptoms that can impact productivity and focus. Be clear about how it affects your specific work tasks, such as meeting deadlines, concentrating, or managing stress.

Ask for reasonable adjustments:

Under the UK's Equality Act 2010, PMDD may be considered a disability if it substantially affects your daily activities.

You could request reasonable adjustments, such as:	Other reasonable adjustments may include:
Flexible start and finish times	Easy access to toilets
The option to work from home during your symptomatic phase	An allocated desk rather than hot-desking, so it can be set up with everything you need
A reduced workload or extended deadlines during difficult days	Considerations around uniforms, such as colour, sizing and fit (<i>especially with bloating, pain, heavy bleeding and sensory sensitivity</i>)
Access to a quiet space or the ability to take more frequent breaks	Reducing sensory stimulation in the environment (<i>for example lighting, noise, screens, dividers, window blinds, or a quieter area</i>)
	Temporary changes to duties or responsibilities during your most symptomatic days

Frame the discussion around solutions:

Rather than focusing on limitations, present solutions that would help you work more effectively, such as adjusting deadlines or allowing flexibility with your hours.

Managing work stress with PMDD

Work stress can make PMDD symptoms even more challenging to handle. Managing both stress and your PMDD requires proactive planning and self care.

Here's how:

Communicate your needs regularly

After discussing your condition with your employer, maintain open communication.

Let them know if adjustments are helping or if further support is needed.

Delegate when possible

If your workload is too heavy during symptomatic phases, delegate tasks or ask for help from colleagues.

This can help alleviate pressure and prevent burnout.

Break work into manageable chunks

On days when brain fog or fatigue is overwhelming, try working in short bursts with regular breaks.

Breaking tasks into smaller steps can make them feel less overwhelming.

Create a calming work environment

Whether you work in an office or from home, set up a workspace that helps reduce stress. Keep your desk organised, add calming elements like plants or aromatherapy, and, if possible, try to work in a quiet space with minimal distractions.

Set boundaries

Set clear boundaries between work and rest. If you work from home, avoid working from your bedroom to maintain it as a place of relaxation.

Similarly, turn off work-related notifications outside of work hours to allow yourself time to unwind.

Seeking support and resources

If managing PMDD and work stress becomes too overwhelming, seeking external support can help:

Mental health support

Many workplaces offer **Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)** or access to mental health professionals.

Counselling, therapy, or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help manage PMDD-related stress and anxiety.

Peer support

Finding support from others who have PMDD can be empowering.

Consider joining online or in-person support groups where you can share experiences and coping strategies.

Use available resources

Reach out to charities like **The PMDD Project** or organisations that **specialise in menstrual health** for information, advice and support.

The PMDD Project can provide workplace training to increase understanding for managers and colleagues in the workplace.

Where PMDD may be protected under the Equality Act, the workplace have an obligation to make reasonable adjustments (but what's considered reasonable can vary from one workplace to another); where adjustments or accommodations go beyond what may be considered reasonable, someone can apply for an Access to Work grant which can cover things like specialist equipment and assistive software, support workers, job coach, mental health support, physical workplace changes.

To find out more about our PMDD workplace training, please get in touch with engagement@thepmddproject.org.

Desk essentials

Warm blanket	Supportive chair and cushions
Mindfulness tools <i>e.g. focus timers</i>	Hydration and healthy snacks
Desk organiser and planner	Aromatherapy diffuser
Mini fan	Noise cancelling headphones
Pain relief medication	Stress balls or fidget toys

Work essentials for *on-the-go professionals*

Heat patches	Pain relief medication or portable TENS machine
Support belt or compression band	Portable snacks and water bottle
Essential oil roller	Cooling gel
Comfortable, supportive shoes or compression socks	Scheduled micro-breaks
Noise reduction earplugs	Stress balls or fidget toys

Managing PMDD at work can be tough, but with proactive planning, effective communication, and the right support, you can balance your health with your professional responsibilities.

Whether it's adjusting your workload, setting boundaries, or speaking openly with your employer, small steps can help you take control of your work life and manage stress more effectively.

Remember, you are entitled to support, and creating a sustainable work-life balance is key to managing PMDD in the workplace.

Further reading

PMDD Research | Dr Lynsay Matthews and Julie Riddell

Need urgent support?

We know that managing PMDD can be incredibly difficult, and at times, the emotional weight can feel overwhelming. If you are experiencing severe distress, suicidal thoughts, or feel you are in crisis, please know that you are not alone and that support is available. You deserve to be heard and kept safe.

If you are in immediate danger:

Please call 999 or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department immediately.

Samaritans: Call 116 123 for free, 24/7 confidential support, or visit www.samaritans.org.

Shout: Text 'SHOUT' to 85258 for free, confidential, 24/7 text support.

Please note: This resource is intended for information and peer support; it is not a substitute for professional mental health care or crisis intervention. Please reach out to your GP, local mental health services, or the resources above if you need urgent help.

