

Understanding and Coping with Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)



This e-book has been thoughtfully created by The Cove Therapy's advanced practicum student, Paige Ryan. She brings together her own personal experience, learnings, and research to present a "place to start" for those who think they might have PMDD, who have been recently diagnosed, or who are looking to learn more. We hope you can take out of it exactly what you need.





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Welcome!

We're so glad you're here. Talking about periods and mental health can be tough, especially when they come intertwined in a disorder like Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD). This resource is here to shed some light on this often misunderstood and isolating disorder. Whether you're navigating PMDD yourself, or simply interested in learning more, inside you'll find insights designed to help understand and navigate the highs and lows of PMDD with compassion.

The Cove Therapy

What is PMDD?



Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) is a much more severe form of PMS, recognized as a cyclical, hormone-based mood disorder.

Unlike typical PMS, PMDD brings about intense emotional and physical symptoms that can be overwhelming. In 2013, it was included in the 5th Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) under Major Depressive Disorders, highlighting its significant impact on mental health. It's estimated that 2-8% of women and individuals assigned female at birth (AFAB) meet the criteria for PMDD.

It's important to recognize that PMDD is not a hormonal imbalance, but rather an abnormal reaction in the brain to normal hormonal changes throughout the menstrual cycle. PMDD can cause severe mood swings, depression, anxiety, and physical discomfort, making daily life challenging. However, understanding that PMDD is a recognized medical condition can be a first step towards finding relief and support.

Potential Risk Factors



While there isn't currently a definitive cause or single indicator for the development of PMDD, research studies have shown that the following may be potential risk factors:

- Trauma experienced in early life may be a risk factor for PMDD
- High stress levels
- Smoking
- PMDD is believed to run in families and may be heritable
- Research suggests that women with PMDD might have genetic differences affecting how they process sex hormones like estrogen and progesterone.
- Studies have found that certain genetic variations may predispose to the development of PMDD
 - Recent studies found a link between PMDD and changes in the GABAergic system genes, specifically in the GABRB2 gene which affects GABA-A receptors
 - Recent studies show differential expression of genes in the estrogen-sensitive ESC/E(Z) complex in PMDD patients

PMDD Symptoms

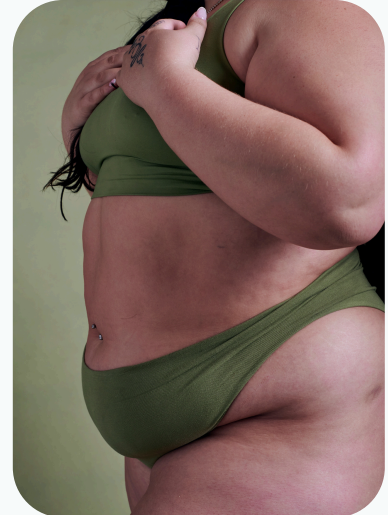
To meet the diagnostic criteria for PMDD, in most menstrual cycles, at least five of the symptoms listed below must be present in the week leading up to menstruation, and start to improve within a few days of the start of your period, and must be minimal or disappear in the week postmenses.

One or more of the following symptoms must be present:

1. Marked affective lability (sudden mood shifts or mood swings, feeling tearful, increased sensitivity to rejection)
2. Marked irritability or anger or increased personal conflicts
3. Marked depressed mood, feelings of hopelessness, or self-deprecating thoughts
4. Marked anxiety, tension, and/or feelings of being keyed up or on edge

In addition to the symptoms listed above, one or more of the following symptoms must also be present, to reach a total of at least five.

1. Decreased interest in usual activities
2. Difficulty concentrating
3. Lethargy, easily tired, or lack of energy
4. Change in appetite (over-eating, or food cravings)
5. Insomnia or hypersomnia
6. Feelings of being overwhelmed or out of control
7. Physical symptoms (breast swelling/tenderness, muscle or joint pain, feeling bloated)



Symptom Tracking

PREMENSTRUAL SYMPTOM TRACKER (DAILY RECORD OF SEVERITY OF PROBLEMS)

Name:

Month:

INSTRUCTIONS

Print off as many copies as you need to complete a **full two months** worth of tracking. Begin tracking your premenstrual symptoms with this chart today. Fill it out **daily** (preferably at the end of your day). Two full months of menstrual cycle charting will allow for a more accurate assessment.

Each evening note the degree to which you experienced each of the problems listed below. Put an "x" in the box which corresponds to the severity:

1 - not at all 2 - minimal 3 - mild 4 - moderate 5 - severe 6 - extreme

SYMPTOMS

| Enter day of the week (e.g. Monday = 'M') | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Note any spotting by entering 'S' | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Note menstrual bleeding by entering 'M' | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Date (i.e. 1 = 1st of the month) | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |
| SYMPTOMS | 1. Felt depressed, sad, "down," or "blue" or felt hopeless; or felt worthless or guilty | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| IMPACT | At work, school, home, or in daily routine, at least one of the problems noted above caused reduction of production of efficiency | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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The Tough Days

A Guide To Help You Get Through

1. Recognize and Acknowledge Your Symptoms

- Understand that what you're experiencing is part of PMDD and not a reflection of your true self.
- Keep a journal to track your symptoms and identify patterns, which can help you anticipate and prepare for tough days.

2. Self-Care Strategies

- Rest and Relaxation: Ensure you get plenty of rest. Take short naps if needed and prioritize a good night's sleep.
- Mindfulness and Meditation: Practice mindfulness techniques or meditation to help calm your mind and reduce stress.
- Exercise: Move your body. Activities like yoga, stretching, or walking can help boost your mood and energy levels.

3. Nutrition and Hydration

- Balanced Diet: Try to keep a balanced diet and stick to consistent mealtimes when you're in the midst of tough times.
- Hydration: Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated.
- Avoid Triggers: Limit intake of caffeine, alcohol, and sugary foods which can exacerbate symptoms.

4. Emotional Support

- Connect with Loved Ones: Reach out to friends or family members who understand and support you.
- Join Support Groups: Consider joining a PMDD support group, either in person or online, to share experiences and gain support from others who understand what you're going through.
- Therapy: Consider speaking with a therapist who can help you develop coping strategies and provide emotional support.
- Medical Support: Consult with a healthcare provider for medical advice and potential treatments that can alleviate PMDD symptoms.

5. Create a Comfort Kit

- Put together a kit with items that bring you comfort and joy. This could include a favorite book, cozy blanket, essential oils, or any other items that help you feel better when you're struggling.



Thank-You

FINAL NOTES

As we wrap up, it's important to remember that dealing with PMDD can feel overwhelming and isolating, but you're not alone. By learning more about PMDD and exploring different ways to manage it, you're taking the first step towards taking away its power. Together, we can spread awareness about PMDD, and continue the conversation about the connection between women's hormones and mental health.

Thank-you for taking the time to look through this resource. Remember to slow down, take care of yourself, and give yourself the kindness and compassion you deserve. You've got this!

At The Cove, we are passionate about mental health. If you have questions, comments, or if you'd like to work with us, we'd love to hear from you! You can reach us at hello@thecovetherapy.ca





References & Resources

<https://iapmd.org>

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