

Premenstrual Syndrome: Understanding the monthly typhoon

Premenstrual syndrome, also known as PMS, is often jokingly referred to as the monthly supernatural phenomenon in which women become possessed by an angry spirit that seeks to make men's lives a living nightmare. In reality, premenstrual syndrome is defined as a combination of emotional, physical, psychological and mood disturbances that occur one or two weeks before the menstrual cycle and disappear with the onset of bleeding. Despite the sarcasm that might surround PMS, the symptoms for some women are severe enough to interfere with their lives.

A wide range of emotional and physical symptoms have been associated with PMS. The most known emotional and psychological symptoms include: anxiety, tension, exaggerated mood swings and depression. Women might also experience irritability, anger, oversensitivity, crying spells and trouble with concentration or memory. Nonetheless, physical symptoms attributed to PMS consist of fatigue, breast tenderness, acne, muscle pain, backache, headache and bloating. Other physical signs include disturbances with sleep and appetite changes with overeating or food cravings.

Menstruating women of any age can be affected by the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome. The specific emotional and physical symptoms associated with PMS vary between women. For some women PMS is a simple monthly inconvenience, while for others it is a severe hassle that hinders their daily functioning. Each woman's symptoms tend to recur in predictable patterns that may be predominantly intense in some months and only trivial in others.

Women are often concerned with the difficulty of diagnosing PMS because many physical and psychological conditions can mimic its symptoms. Keeping a menstrual diary that documents physical and emotional symptoms that appear over the months, can be a helpful diagnostic tool. PMS is perhaps an accurate diagnosis if the symptoms appear to arise regularly around ovulation and continue until the menstrual period begins. A menstrual diary, not only helps diagnose PMS, but also provides women with a better understanding of their own body and psychological states. The diagnosis of PMS along with a comprehension of the symptoms attributed to it can help women adapt and cope better with their symptoms.

The exact cause of premenstrual syndrome remains a mystery. Although there is no solid scientific proof of a specific cause, many theories suggest probable explanations. Studies suggest that PMS results from the alteration of the sex hormones levels that occur during the menstrual

cycle. Moreover, chemical changes in the brain that involve neurotransmitters can also be linked to PMS. On the other hand, studies have shown that the severity of PMS is not related to psychological stress. Additionally, it has not been specifically associated with any personality type.

Similar to its tricky diagnosis, the treatment of PMS can also be challenging. An effective treatment approach for one woman might not be as effective for another. However, the general lifestyle changes that may help ease PMS symptoms usually include eating healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. When having PMS symptoms it is important for women to avoid salty and sugary food. Moreover, it is advisable to avoid the consumption of alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes.

In addition to eating healthy, evidence suggests that exercise can aid in relieving some of the symptoms of PMS. Physical activity plays a role in reducing nervous tension and anxiety while providing overall health benefit as well. On the other hand, getting enough sleep can also help ease the symptoms. Women should try to get around eight hours of sleep each night in order to ensure that their body is getting the rest it needs.

Nonetheless, physical symptoms of PMS such as cramps, headaches, backaches or breast tenderness can often be relieved by the aid of over-the-counter pain relievers such as Ibuprofen or aspirin. However in the cases of severe PMS, prescription medicines may be used to reduce the symptoms. On the other hand, women can alleviate their emotional symptoms by finding healthy ways to cope with their stress. Some women find it helpful to talk to a friend, do yoga or even have a massage.

“Better watch out, she is PMS-ing!” is a sarcastic warning that people often use without taking into regard the whirlwind of physical and emotional symptoms that women have to go through each month. Simply understanding and supporting women during their menstrual cycle, can easily ensure a peaceful attitude between women and their surroundings.

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