



Women's Health Specialists

115 Eagle Springs Drive
Stockbridge, GA 30281
770.474.0064

PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome)

The menstrual cycle begins with the first day of bleeding of one period and ends with the first day of the next period. An average menstrual cycle lasts about 28 days. During the menstrual cycle, two hormones made by the ovaries, estrogen and progesterone, cause changes in the lining of the uterus.

On day 14, an egg is released from one of the ovaries. This is called ovulation. After ovulation, progesterone levels increase. If fertilization does not occur, the levels of estrogen and progesterone decrease. This signals the uterus to shed its lining. This shedding is your monthly period. It marks the beginning of your next cycle.

Women who do not ovulate do not get PMS. This means PMS does not occur during menopause. (The time in a woman's life when the ovaries no longer function.) A woman who has had a hysterectomy but still has ovaries may ovulate and still get PMS.

Symptoms of PMS

Women who have PMS have symptoms in the second half of the cycle (after they ovulate on about day 14). Common symptoms include emotional symptoms like being irritable, mood swings, depression, crying spells, social withdrawal, lack of concentration, forgetfulness and being overly sensitive. The physical symptoms include sore breasts, abdominal bloating, and changes in appetite, food cravings, swelling of hands and feet, headaches, feeling tired and muscle aches. These changes occur before a woman's period and often resolve once the period has started. They appear and go away at about the same time in a woman's cycle each month.

How to Treat PMS

Treatment can help relieve certain symptoms of PMS. It may involve lifestyle changes, medical treatment, or both. Lifestyle changes include exercise and taking a calcium supplement each day. Cutting down on stress, and reaching out to family members for emotional support may also relieve some of the symptoms. Medical treatment may include birth control pills, which can reduce the physical symptoms of PMS. For many women with severe PMS, certain medications that alter mood and are used to treat depression or anxiety can relieve some PMS symptoms as well.