

# The Wellness Express™



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## Diet, Exercise & Chiropractic Can Ease PMS

Presented by: Dr. Mark Glesener

Bloating. Cramps. Headaches. Anger. Depression. Low back pain. These are just a handful of the symptoms women endure when dealing with premenstrual syndrome (PMS). For many women, the symptoms are annoying but manageable. For others, PMS can be so severe it seriously disrupts life. About 75% to 85% of females will suffer from various degrees of PMS during their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

Science is still not clear on why some women suffer from PMS and others do not. The severity of PMS can vary greatly among women, but as they get closer to menopause, women often encounter more intense PMS symptoms.

Health researchers have identified hormonal change as a key component in the development of PMS. Hormones are complex. They impact both physical and mental well-being. In fact, an entire field of medicine – endocrinology - is devoted to the study of hormones and their impact on health.

Another intriguing angle to PMS is its possible link with a depressed nervous system. A Japanese study revealed that women with PMS showed reduced nerve activity each month.

Women with the most severe symptoms may have a permanently depressed nervous system.<sup>2</sup> While this is only one study, it does reveal how complicated the causes of premenstrual syndrome may actually be.

Chiropractors are experts at relieving subluxations that irritate the nervous system, so it is no surprise chiropractic adjustments help many women with PMS. Research shows that women with premenstrual syndrome who underwent chiropractic adjustments reported a reduction in PMS symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

While traditional medical intervention and medication may be necessary for some PMS sufferers, a lot of women can make a big impact on PMS with some lifestyle and dietary changes. Evidence shows that proper exercise and healthy eating can reduce PMS problems.

One study found that a vegetarian diet was associated with a shorter duration of PMS. Estrogen is believed to intensify PMS problems, and a plant-based diet may boost levels of serum sex-hormone binding globulin, which binds to estrogen and lowers levels of the hormone.<sup>4</sup>

### Exercise of the Week

#### Plank Position – Hand to Opposite Shoulder

Difficulty: Advanced

*(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)*

**Start:** Lie on ball, face down. Walk hands out to assume plank position with lower legs or feet on ball. The closer ball is to feet, the more difficult the exercise. Keep stomach tucked in and spine straight.

**Exercise:** Keeping abdominals contracted, and upper body still, lift one hand off floor and touch opposite shoulder. Return hand back to floor. Stabilize, then try with other hand.

Repeat 10-15 times.



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## Opting for Natural Options

A number of natural substances may help ease a variety of PMS symptoms. But first talk to your chiropractor before using supplements or herbal remedies to make sure they are safe for you, especially if you are pregnant or nursing.

### Black Cohosh

Extract from this flowering plant is often recommended for reducing hot flashes during menopause. However, it may also help lessen PMS symptoms, such as nervousness and irritability. It is available at most health food stores as a liquid or powdered extract or as a tea. European health regulators caution against using black cohosh longer than six months, and pregnant women should not use this herbal remedy as it is linked to premature birth.

### Calcium & Vitamin D

Studies indicate calcium influences hormone production and can lessen PMS symptoms like sadness, irritability, pain and fluid retention. Research reveals women who consumed the highest amounts of calcium and vitamin D had lower incidences of PMS.<sup>5</sup>

Dietary calcium can be found in soy and dairy products, dark green vegetables and dried beans. Unfortunately, vitamin D is not as widely available in our diets as calcium. Some foods are fortified with vitamin D, but it may be necessary to take a daily supplement. Ask your chiropractor for recommendations on how much calcium and vitamin D is right for you.

## Essential Fatty Acids

These types of fat are not produced by your body, so you must acquire them from food or supplements. Omega 3 is one of these essential nutrients and its anti-inflammatory properties can reduce PMS pain.

Research published by the journal *Reproductive Health* showed that women who consumed a pill “containing 2 grams of a combination of gamma linolenic acid, oleic acid, linoleic acid, other polyunsaturated acids and vitamin E reported significantly eased PMS symptoms at both 3 and 6 months after they began the treatment.” Very few of the study participants experienced adverse side effects.<sup>6</sup>

### Vitamin B6 & Vitamin E

A deficiency of vitamin B6 may increase your risk for PMS, so eat foods rich in this nutrient such as meat, poultry, beans, tuna, bananas, carrots and green leafy vegetables. Vitamin B6 may also diminish PMS symptoms like depression.

Vitamin E may help alleviate breast tenderness caused by PMS. Good sources of vitamin E are avocados, nuts, soybeans, and wheat germ oil.



## Quote to Inspire

*"The stubbornness I had as a child has been transmitted into perseverance. I can let go but I don't give up. I don't beat myself up about negative things."*

*- Phylicia Rashad*

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