

# Premenstrual syndrome



By Nutritional Therapist  
Georgie O'Connor for  
CNM (College of  
Naturopathic Medicine)



Severe PMS symptoms such as depression, migraines and constipation are not normal! It is usual to be sensitive to the pre-menstrual hormonal fluctuations which can lead to alterations in mood, energy levels and breast tenderness but it should not be a tyranny to be endured every month.

'Prevention is the best cure', so good levels of dietary nutrients every day throughout the month will provide your body with the tools required to put those hormones to work and tidy them up when their work is done.

Fibre is incredibly important when it comes to disposing of surplus hormones as it binds the by-products of hormone detoxification excreted from the liver in bile, and carries them out of the digestive tract. Soluble fibre also alleviates constipation which may worsen at that time of the month. Ground flaxseed (linseed) is particularly useful as it works as both a soluble fibre and a source of phytoestrogens which can help reduce PMS symptoms by binding to oestrogen receptor sites thereby blocking stronger endogenous oestrogens.

Zinc from pumpkin seeds or whole

grains will help to keep acne at bay. Enough iron and folic acid from green leafy vegetables with a citrus dressing will help to battle fatigue and magnesium from almonds or cashews should offset aches and cramps.

Stress generally worsens symptoms of PMS by adversely altering the balance of hormones so it's really important to find ways to relax. The endorphins released during exercise can alter your perception of pain, but if exercise is the last thing you feel like doing then try aromatherapy to help calm your mind – lavender, rosemary or lemon balm are all helpful.

Excess salt causes bloating, alcohol can worsen your mood, caffeine can increase breast tenderness and sugar exacerbates food cravings, so it's worth examining your diet, perhaps keeping a food diary to see if any food cravings are actually sabotaging your efforts.

And of course good hydration is an essential part of any wellness plan, so please make sure you're drinking eight glasses of water every day. Dilute fruit juices, coconut water and herbal teas are also good options.



**CNM trains students for careers in natural therapies. Don't miss the great talks at CNM London's Open Weekend on 22nd and 23rd March.**  
**[www.naturopathy-uk.com](http://www.naturopathy-uk.com) 01342 410505.**