

Symptoms of PMS: (Symptoms can vary from woman to woman)

- Acne
- Swollen or tender breasts
- Feeling tired or experiencing trouble sleeping
- Upset stomach, bloating, constipation, or diarrhea
- Headache or backache
- Appetite changes or food cravings
- Joint or muscle pain
- Trouble with concentration or memory
- Tension, irritability, mood swings, or crying spells
- Anxiety or depression



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Menstrual Cycle**

The menstrual cycle is the process by which a woman's body prepares for pregnancy. At the beginning of the menstrual cycle, levels of estrogen rise which causes the lining of the uterus to grow and thicken. In the ovaries, an egg starts to mature. During ovulation, about the middle of the cycle, the egg leaves the ovary. The egg begins to travel down the fallopian tubes to the uterus. If the egg becomes fertilized by a sperm cell and attaches to the uterus, the woman becomes pregnant. If not, the uterus does not need the extra thick lining and it begins to shed it through the vagina. This is menstruation. The average menstrual cycle is 28 days from the start of one to the start of the next.

### **Menstrual Cramps**

Before and during the menstrual cycle, many women experience cramping. Cramping often becomes less severe after a woman has given birth or when she reaches her mid-twenties. Other causes of cramping could be fibroid tumors, pelvic adhesions, ovarian cysts, or the use of an intrauterine device (IUD) for birth control. Menstrual cramps are thought to be related to a hormone-like naturally occurring substance called prostaglandins which causes the uterus to contract. Because of this, when a woman does not ovulate it is unlikely she will encounter cramps during her periods so physicians will often prescribe oral contraceptives to ease painful periods. However, you should be aware that birth control pills cause abnormal bleeding in some women.

### **Easing Pain Caused by Cramps**

- Over-the-counter medication such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen sodium (Aleve)
- Regular physical activity
- A warm bath, aromatherapy, or a heating pad placed on your lower back and abdomen
- Relax and take some time for yourself to reduce the effects of everyday stress on your body

### What is a Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)?

Premenstrual syndrome is a group of symptoms linked to the menstrual cycle. PMS symptoms occur 1 to 2 weeks before your period starts. The symptoms usually go away after you start bleeding. For some, it can just be a monthly bother.

For others, it may be so severe that it makes it hard to even get through the day. PMS goes away when your monthly periods stop, such as when you get pregnant or go through menopause.