

# Dealing With PMS the Natural Way

By Indra Singh

The numerous roles and responsibilities that we women have can take their toll on our health and our natural cycles. I am one of those women – supermom, householder and bread winner – and I have suffered through regular episodes of pre/post menstrual syndrome while trying to achieve my daily goals. I have found that the solution lies in knowing how to care for my body mentally and physically from the inside out, nurturing myself with good foods, exercise and daily amounts of relaxation. Finding balance is the key and can help you live a healthy, happy and productive life...and that benefits you and your whole family.

The severity of PMS can vary from person to person and from month to month. It is not only caused by an imbalance of hormones, but can also be due to stress, poor diet and a busy lifestyle. Symptoms may consist of the following:

- Mood swings
- Tiredness
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Aggression
- Depression
- Headache
- Bloating
- Weight gain
- Breast tenderness
- Back pain
- Clumsiness

During your monthly cycle, your mood changes approximately every two-and-a-half days. You may find that one day you feel full of enthusiasm and that you are keen to communicate and socialize. Another day, you may feel compassionate and giving, and other times you may take on feelings of insecurity and negativity.

A positive way to recognize these inner cycles is to keep a daily journal for expressing your deepest thoughts and feelings. Through out the months, a pattern will begin to form and awareness of your body's inner rhythms will become apparent. It is also important to take time to nourish your individual needs,

feeding the soul with nurturing activities such as a massage, a walk in the park or a weekly yoga session.

## Yoga and Meditation to Improve PMS

As little as thirty minutes a day will balance the mind and body and improve the lifestyle of anyone suffering from PMS.

The following is a simple meditation to help bring serenity to a negative mind state that can often occur during a female's monthly cycle. This meditation will help to balance out emotions such as anger, panic and agitation.

Be advised when practicing this meditation that the breath should not be held if you are suffering from heart conditions, abnormal breathing difficulties or are pregnant. If concerned, please consult a doctor before beginning the practice.

## How to Begin

To start the meditation practice, begin by sitting cross legged; if this is not comfortable, sit on a chair. Rest the backs of the hands on the knees with the palms facing upwards. While sitting, begin to lengthen the spine, visualizing space being created between each vertebrae on the inhalation and relaxing the breath on the exhalation.

Inhale for five seconds. Hold for five seconds. Exhale for five seconds. Breathe through the nose and, in time, begin to increase the length of each count. When practicing, it is important not to force the breath.

When starting this meditation for the first time, begin with three minutes and work up to thirty minutes at a slow, steady pace, adding one minute per day.

Relax on your back with eyes closed when the meditation is complete.

## You Are What You Eat

Specific symptoms that may occur through your monthly cycle can be magnified by particular foods. To keep the hormones balanced and the moods steady, you should omit or considerably reduce certain things from your diet. These include alcohol, caffeine and refined sugars. These three things raise the blood sugar level, causing it to peak and drop. They also agitate the functions of the body and are a strong factor for the majority of the physical and emotional symptoms mentioned above. To see satisfactory results, reducing these foods should become a permanent part of any PMS sufferer's lifestyle. To keep your body system balanced, eat fresh, natural whole foods which contain plenty of *prana* (lifeforce). These are foods such as fruit, vegetables and whole wheat products with no refined additives. It is also important to drink plenty of water and herbal teas to keep the internal system cleansed and hydrated. Potent foods for women include:

- Ginger – reduces menstrual cramps

- Sesame oil – helps menstruation
- Mangoes – corrects cycle irregularities
- Eggplant – energizes the entire system and regulates menstrual flow
- Rice bran syrup – rich in all B vitamins and helps regulate moods
- Raw almond oil – helps to keep cholesterol levels low, reduces body fat, cleanses toxins, makes skin healthy and is a high source of protein
- Almonds (peeled) – five almonds a day for protein, fiber, calcium, magnesium, potassium, vitamin E, zinc and selenium
- Green chillies – prevent constipation, rich in vitamin C
- Wheat berries – cleanse the intestinal tract and are nourishing
- Turmeric – heals internal organs (cook before eating)
- Yogurt – heals digestive system and can also be used as a douche

There are a number of poses in yoga that can be done for the majority of a woman's menstrual cycle except during the time she is menstruating.

Plough pose is one of those postures. It brings the body back into a balanced state and restores the flow of energy, especially in the spinal column. It reduces tension in the back and the sex organs, stimulating digestion and elimination.

## Plough Pose

Lie down on a soft surface to protect the spine, resting the arms down by the sides of the body with the palms facing downwards. Push on the palms and take the legs over the head into an inverted position, aiming to touch the toes on the floor behind the head. If the position is difficult to maintain, use the hands on the back to support the spine. If the toes touch the floor behind the head, walk the feet gently backwards until the shoulders take the majority of the body weight and the chin is tucked in tight to the chest. This will stimulate the thyroid gland so that when the position is released the gland will receive a fresh supply of blood. In the plough posture, the breath will naturally become shallow; breathe deeply, focusing on a long slow breath and it will help to strengthen the capacity of the lungs.

When the body is ready to release, place the hands back on the floor, palms flat to the ground and begin to slowly uncurl the back to the floor, one vertebrae at a time, bringing the legs down straight to complete the posture.

Tuck the knees tight into the chest, creating a small ball with the body. Rocking from side to side in this position will give the back a gentle massage against the floor.

## Forward Bend with Leg Extension

Sit on the heels and extend the left leg straight back along the ground. Bend forward placing the forehead on the floor. Put both arms along the sides of the body, palms facing upwards. Relax all the muscles and relax the breath. This position can be held for up to three minutes on each side. Rise up on an inhale, bring both legs back to the first position, sitting on the heels and repeat on the other side.

This position is a meditation in itself. The pituitary gland is stimulated and the ovaries are relaxed.

## Back Platform Pose

Sit straight with the legs stretched out in front. Place the hands on the ground on either side of the buttocks. Push on the palms and lift the hips up until a platform is formed with the abdomen straight. Raise the head to look forward, keeping the legs straight. Continue for three minutes.

This position will release mental anxiety and tension, strengthening the lower back and hips.

While you are taking the time to commit to a healthier lifestyle, throughout these physical and mental changes, one of the main aspects to consider is **balance**:

- **Be** patient with yourself.
- Allow yourself time out to be who you are.
- **Listen** to your body from the inside out.
- **Accept** yourself.



- Nurture the body's needs physically, emotionally and spiritually with good nutrition.
- Create and use a variety of media such as painting, writing or sewing to enhance self expression.
- Embrace love and support from others.

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