

FACT SHEET *PMS vs. PMDD*

Both happen before a period. PMDD is more severe and has specific diagnostic criteria.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE	
PMS	PMDD
PMS means premenstrual symptoms that show up before a period and improve when the period begins.	PMDD is a severe premenstrual mood disorder that can seriously disrupt daily life.
Symptoms can be physical, emotional, or both.	Diagnosis depends on timing, symptoms, and how much they interfere with functioning.

WHEN PMDD USUALLY HAPPENS
PMDD symptoms usually begin after ovulation, get worse in the final week before the period, start to improve within a few days after bleeding begins, and are much better or gone in the week after the period.
That timing matters. If symptoms are severe all month, another condition may also be present.

COMMON PMDD SYMPTOMS	
EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS	OTHER SYMPTOMS
• intense mood swings • strong irritability or anger • deep sadness or hopelessness • high anxiety or feeling on edge	• low interest in usual activities • trouble concentrating • fatigue • appetite changes or cravings • sleeping too much or too little • feeling overwhelmed or out of control • bloating, breast tenderness, headache, or muscle/joint pain

A good shortcut: PMDD is not just stronger symptoms. It is a clear monthly pattern plus serious impact on life.

FACT SHEET

PMDD + ADHD

Why the overlap can be confusing for ADHD women.

WHAT WE KNOW

PMDD-like symptoms appear to be more common in people with ADHD than in people without ADHD.

That does not mean every ADHD woman with a hard premenstrual week has PMDD. It does mean the overlap is important and deserves attention.

WHY IT FEELS SO COMPLICATED

ADHD CAN ALREADY INVOLVE

- emotional dysregulation
- executive-function strain
- sleep problems
- overwhelm
- impulsivity or restlessness

PMDD CAN BRING A MONTHLY SPIKE IN

- irritability
- sadness or hopelessness
- anxiety
- trouble concentrating
- exhaustion
- feeling out of control

A USEFUL QUESTION

Ask yourself: What gets clearly worse before my period compared with the rest of the month?

Example: "My ADHD is always there, but before my period I become much more irritable, hopeless, or unable to recover from stress."

ABOUT MEDICATION

Some people notice that their ADHD medication feels less effective before their period. Some clinicians may adjust treatment, but there is not one standard PMDD approach for this. Changes should be made with the prescriber.

If premenstrual symptoms include suicidal thoughts or urges to self-harm, seek prompt help. Severe symptoms deserve serious attention.

FACT SHEET

I Think I Have PMDD

What to track and what diagnosis and treatment usually involve.

1 TRACK THE PATTERN

The clearest way to sort this out is daily symptom tracking across at least two menstrual cycles.

Track mood, irritability, anxiety, concentration, sleep, appetite, physical symptoms, and how much symptoms interfere with life.

2 WHAT CLINICIANS LOOK FOR

TIMING	SYMPTOMS	IMPACT
Symptoms show up in the final week before the period, improve after it starts, and are much better afterward.	At least 5 symptoms total, including at least 1 core mood symptom such as mood swings, irritability, depressed mood, or anxiety.	Symptoms cause real distress or get in the way of work, school, relationships, or daily functioning.

3 TREATMENTS THAT MAY HELP

SSRIs	HORMONAL TREATMENT	THERAPY + SUPPORT
Often a first-line treatment. Some people take them all month, and some use them only during the luteal phase.	Some combined oral contraceptives can help. More intensive hormone-suppressing treatments may be used in severe cases with specialist care.	Therapy, sleep support, exercise, and other coping strategies may help as part of the overall treatment plan.

Next step: bring your symptom tracking to a clinician who understands menstrual-cycle-related mood symptoms.