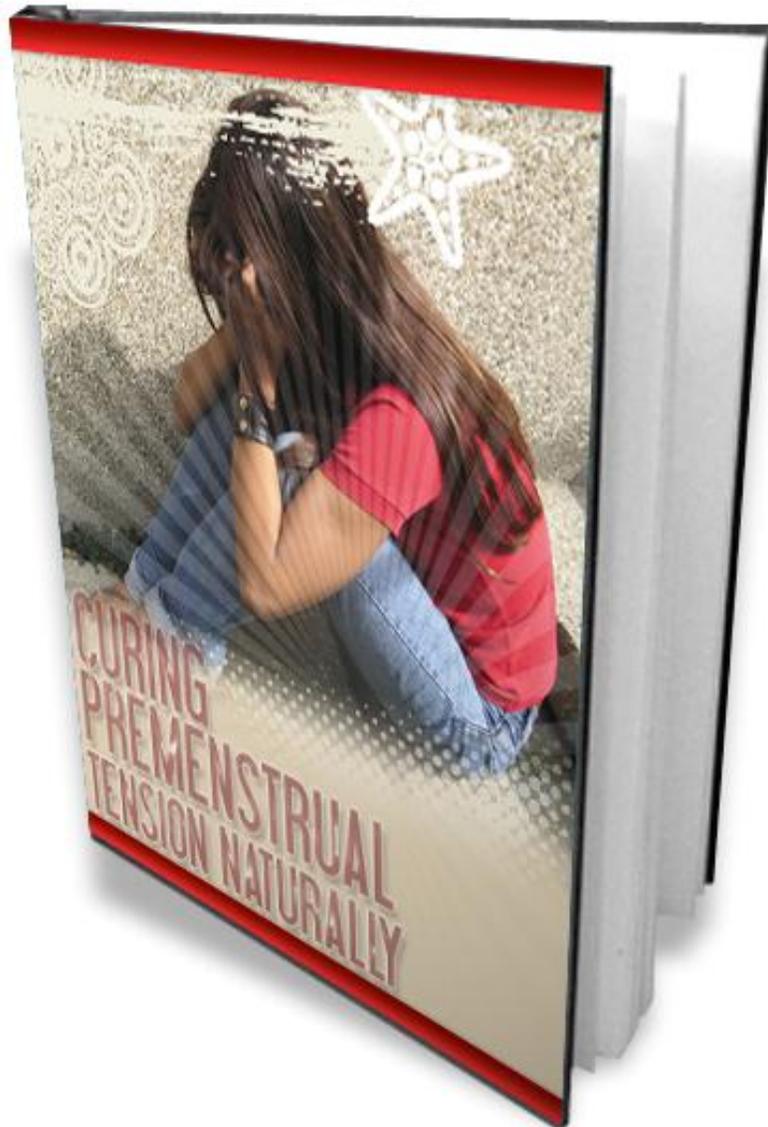




## **Curing Premenstrual Tension Naturally**



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## Introduction

For many millions of women all over the world, misery and irritability are a monthly fact of life, something that they have to live with month after month after month.

However, what most of these women perhaps don't know is that whilst premenstrual tension (PMT) or premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is suffered by as many as three out of every four ladies, it is not necessary to suffer anywhere near as much as they do.

Although the number who suffer premenstrual problems as a chronic condition every month is mercifully small at somewhere around 2-5% of all sufferers, it is nevertheless a fact that for many women, PMT or PMS is a blight on their lives every month that they could well do without.

In truth, there are plenty of entirely natural things that women can do to limit the worst symptoms associated with PMT or even get rid of them altogether and of course, because we are talking of completely natural solutions here, there is very little possibility of adverse side-effects either.

Before moving on to begin looking at how you can deal with PMT entirely naturally, let's start by considering the condition itself and why perhaps as many as 75% of women suffer from it each and every month.





## What is premenstrual tension?

According to the definition of [premenstrual syndrome](#) featured on Wikipedia, there is a difference between PMS and PMT. However, according to most medical sites that mention both PMT and PMS, they tend to do so interchangeably.

In essence, they are one and the same thing as far as most authoritative online resources are concerned so I am going to assume that they are the same for the purposes of this book as well.

Indeed, many resources suggest that PMS is a far more accurate description of the condition suffered by so many women every month mainly because describing it as premenstrual tension suggests that there is only one symptom suffered by these ladies.

In truth, there are many different symptoms suffered by those who are troubled by the condition, so using the phrase premenstrual syndrome is probably more accurate as it suggests that there are many different signs or ill-effects of the condition, which is absolutely true.

Although estimates of how many women actually suffer PMS vary, it is a fact that most women will suffer the condition on at least some occasions. However, for the vast majority of PMS sufferers, it is a condition which although it is generally very mild nevertheless besets them every month. Premenstrual syndrome is something that is completely regular feature of their life which (it seems) they cannot avoid.

For most women who suffer PMS, the condition usually sets in between seven and fourteen days before the beginning of their period, although for some women who suffer severe PMS, the condition can become one that is almost permanent, with symptoms being present before, during and after menstruation. This happens because many symptoms have a knock-on effect that causes other problems to arise at a later date, hence you have what is effectively non-stop PMS.

Although as suggested there is no globally agreed definition of exactly what constitutes premenstrual syndrome, there are two definitions that are commonly used by researchers when studying the condition. These are:

- The definition proposed by the researchers at the University 5





of California which suggests that there should be both physical and psychological symptoms of PMS shown during the five days before [menses](#) for three consecutive menstrual cycles. Furthermore, these same symptoms must not be present during the other parts of the cycle, especially the pre-ovulatory phase.

- The second definition is that formulated by the National Institute of Mental Health in the USA which is focused on the severity of symptoms in cycle days from 5 to 10 compared with the severity in the six-day period before the onset of menses. According to this definition, symptoms have to be seen for two consecutive menstrual cycles to establish PMS.

Whichever definition you use, for the majority who suffer PMS, the most common symptoms are mood swings and irritability, breast tenderness, headaches and nausea but for the majority who are relatively lucky, the symptoms tend to be very mild, in some cases so mild that they are almost unnoticeable.

On the other hand, a small percentage of women are not nearly so fortunate with their symptoms being a great deal more severe and therefore considerably more disruptive too. And even though the symptoms highlighted above are the most common, there are many other symptoms of both a physical and psychological nature that many women suffer.

Physical symptoms of PMS can include some or all of the following:

- Abdominal pain and/or bloating;
- Joint and/or muscle pain;
- Headaches;
- Chronic diarrhea or constipation;
- Worsening of pre-existing medical problems such as skin conditions;
- Onset or worsening of acne;
- Hot flushes;
- Breast tenderness;
- Food and/or alcohol cravings;





- Excess water retention;
- Weight gain;
- General weakness.

Whilst for women who suffer severe PMS every month, these physical symptoms can be extremely unpleasant and debilitating, most women find that it is the psychological effects of PMS that are most damaging.

Indeed, this is the primary reason why the alternative term premenstrual *tension* is used to describe the condition.

Included amongst the psychological symptoms associated with PMS are the following:

- Mood swings which are often very violent and sudden;
- Irritability ranges from mild to extreme in severity;
- Stress, anxiety or depression, often leading to insomnia;
- Decreased libido;
- Weepiness;
- Poor concentration and a lack of focus.

While most who suffer PMS find that the physical symptoms of the condition are relatively mild, the psychological side of suffering is not always quite so easy. For example, some women will change to such an extent that they become almost like a completely different person, sometimes even going so far as to resort to violence against loved ones.

Furthermore, because many women find it difficult to concentrate and focus on what they are supposed to be doing, work performance often suffers and they are considerably more likely to suffer accidents when suffering the worst of PMS.

In short, PMS can be an extremely nasty condition, one that no woman is ever going to be happy about. Consequently, many will seek medical attention if they suffer severely, whilst others will resort to non-prescription drugs to help them get over the worst ravages of PMS.

Turning to drugs should never be the first option of choice however, because even non-prescription drugs have been known to have serious adverse side-effects. We will consider some of the drugs to which 7





some women might turn when suffering PMS and their potential side-effects little later in the report.

Before doing so however, let us consider what is known about the causes of PMS.





## What causes PMS?

The first thing to say about the causes of PMS is that medical science does not really understand why some women suffer physical and/or psychological symptoms each and every month whilst others do not suffer at all. Hence, it is fair to suggest that there is still a reasonable degree of mystery about the exact reasons why some women suffer and others don't.

It is however believed that a primary cause of premenstrual syndrome is the natural change in the balance of female hormones that happens every month as an integral part of the cycle of menstruation. As a result of these natural hormonal changes, there is a reduction in the level of progesterone in the body, are falling off of levels of the hormone that prepares the uterus to receive a fertilized egg.

At the same time, there is also an increase in levels of salt and water retained by the body, hence the feelings of being bloated and retaining too much water.

This does not of course explain exactly why these hormonal changes affect some individuals far more than they affect others. Whilst some experts suggest that all women suffer some symptoms of PMS, in the main these symptoms are mild or extremely mild, so this does not really take us much closer to discovering the course of PMS.

One line of current thinking about the causes suggests that it may be something to do with neurotransmitters that are created by the central nervous system reacting with changing levels of sex hormones which would otherwise be within what are regarded as normal limits by the medical profession.

In particular, it is believed that [serotonin levels in the body](#) may have some connection with the severity (or otherwise) of PMS that is suffered by an individual female, although there is no conclusive proof of this as yet.

Preliminary studies carried out in the [USA some 20 years ago](#) suggested that of women who suffered PMS most severely, perhaps as many as four in every ten showed significantly decreased levels of beta endorphins in the blood at the time of their 'attacks'.

Beta endorphins are naturally occurring opioid neurotransmitters, 9





which is one of the reasons why a lack of them as shown by 40% of women who suffered severe PMS has been likened by many medical professionals to withdrawal symptoms associated with 'coming off' opiate-based drugs like heroin.

Another possible contributory factor is [family history](#) as it is generally believed that women who are from families where more severe PMS is relatively common are more likely to be sufferers themselves. This contention is backed up by the fact that the occurrence of PMS is twice as likely to appear in identical twins than it is in fraternal twins (see previous link for substantiation).

The bottom line is, medical science has still not really established the exact reasons why some women suffer serious psychological and/or physical problems as a result of premenstrual syndrome, whereas others hardly suffer at all.

One thing that is however clear is that there are contributory factors associated with lifestyle and that these factors may increase the risk of suffering severe PMS.

These potential contributory factors include:

- Increased levels of stress and anxiety;
- Pre-existing depression;
- High caffeine intake;
- High alcohol intake;
- Tobacco usage;
- Increasing age (although for most women, PMS is likely to start for the very first time during their 20s or 30s and will probably disappear after they stop menstruating as well);
- Allergies to nuts etc;
- Dietary factors such as a lack of certain vitamins and minerals.

From this list of contributory factors, you can probably see that certain lifestyle changes could help to reduce the severity or the likelihood of PMS being a problem.

We will return to these in detail later after considering how members of the medical profession diagnose premenstrual syndrome.





## How is PMS diagnosed?

The simple answer to the question is, there is no specific method of testing or diagnosing PMS. Because there is no established laboratory test for the condition and none of the symptoms are unique to it, there is no specific method of diagnosis either.

Consequently, it is likely that for any woman who suspects that she has PMS, your doctor or other medical attendant will ask you to keep a diary covering at least two menstrual cycles to establish whether the cited symptoms re-occur on a regular and predictable basis. Armed with this information and assuming that some or all of the symptoms of PMS are present, your doctor is likely to considerably closer to confirming that PMS is the problem.

However, he or she will also need to eliminate other potential causes of your symptoms as well before finally confirming that your problem is indeed premenstrual syndrome. This is important because many symptoms that might be associated with PMS such as depression, stress and anxiety may be a result of PMS but they can be caused by many other physical or psychological conditions as well.

The key here is likely to be the presence (or lack of it) of the symptom outside of the [luteal phase](#).

If depression, stress or any other possible symptom of PMS is seen to be present throughout the month or outside of the luteal phase, it is considerably less likely that it is a symptom of PMS. Consequently, there may be a completely different explanation for that symptom.





## How does medicine deal with PMS?

Once your medical attendant has diagnosed PMS, they may recommend medical intervention to deal with your problem, particularly if PMS is a big problem for you.

In this case, the most common form of treatment is a prescription for a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), with the most commonly prescribed drug being [fluoxetine](#) or Prozac as it is more commonly known. This is a drug that is very commonly used to treat mental problems, particularly depression, panic attacks, nervous disorders and bulimia nervosa and is nowadays one of the most widely prescribed drugs in the Western world.

This does not however mean that it is categorically safe for everyone who takes it. Common side effects of Prozac include nausea, headaches, insomnia, diarrhea and general weakness, all of the physical symptoms that are most commonly associated with PMS in fact!

There are also less common but more severe side-effects of Prozac which can include hypertension (high blood pressure), weight loss or weight gain, shortness of breath and chest pains. In some people, Prozac has been seen to encourage suicidal thoughts as well as increasing levels of aggression and violence, restlessness and a tendency to engage in unusual or erratic behavior.

Other less common adverse side effects of Prozac include arthritis, diabetes, congestive heart failure, asthma, gout and strokes.

In a small number of users, Prozac can cause an unusual but dangerous medical condition known as [serotonin syndrome](#), the symptoms of which include confusion or other forms of severe mental change, rapid heart rate or an irregular heartbeat, fevers, shaking and in the worst cases, serotonin syndrome can lead to a coma.

Other SSRIs that your doctor might recommend include sertraline (commercially known as [Zoloft](#)), fluvoxamine ([Luvox](#)) and paroxetine ([Paxil](#)).

Once again, each of these drugs carry potential adverse side-effects that range from minor to very serious, so even switching away from Prozac to take one of these alternatives is not necessarily going to be the safest solution that you're looking for.





Alternative forms of treatment that your medical attendant might consider administering include various forms of hormone treatments designed to redress the hormonal imbalance associated with PMS.

One way that they might do this is by using hormonal contraception, with a combination of oral contraception and a contraceptive patch. Depending upon the particular combination of contraceptives recommended, this is likely to carry a potential for certain adverse side-effects as well.

If this is the recommendation put forward by your doctor, you should research the particular medicines he or she is recommending to see what the potential side-effects might be because in almost every case, these potential side-effects exist and it is far from certain that they will be pointed out to you by your doctor.

Another alternative treatment that your doctor might recommend in an attempt to redress your hormonal imbalance is progesterone support, and whilst this has form of treatment has been used for many years, the evidence of effectiveness is still fairly limited. Whilst this particular type of treatment is commonly administered [before and during pregnancy](#), the effectiveness of it as a treatment for dealing with PMS is still in doubt, hence it is a treatment that is less commonly prescribed.

A further option that some doctors might consider appropriate for dealing with the worst cases of PMS are [Gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists](#) (GnRH-a's), but these drugs are not without significant risks of serious adverse side-effects either.

In fact, the side-effects of these particular drugs are very much like the symptoms associated with going through the menopause because the drugs serve to reduce estrogen levels in the body. Consequently, the side-effects of taking a GnRH-a could potentially include rapid bone loss (up to 1% of bone mass can be lost every month, although this is reversed as soon as you stop the drug), severe mood swings, increased cholesterol levels, reduced sexual interest, night sweats, hot flushes, insomnia and headaches.

Once again, the side-effects of a GnRH-a drug are going to be nobody's idea of fun, so if your doctor recommends a medicine with which you are not familiar, make sure that you establish whether it is a GnRH-a or not.





Beyond the drugs already highlighted in this chapter, other chemical-based drugs that your doctor is likely to prescribe will be those that deal with other physical symptoms of your PMS.

For example, if water retention is a major problem, then your doctor may well prescribe a diuretic, whereas if there is physical pain involved, he or she may well recommend a painkiller of sufficient strength to deal with the level of pain you are suffering.

Once again, whether there are likely to be any adverse side effects will really depend on the specific drug that you are prescribed.

For example, in the USA, four very common types of diuretic that are regularly prescribed to deal with a wide range of conditions caused or exacerbated by high levels of water retention such as high blood pressure, heart failure and some forms of poisoning in addition to PMS are as follows:

- Hydrochlorothiazide (which is also known as HCTZ);
- Metolazone;
- Furosemide;
- Spironolactone.

In the UK on the other hand, the three most common types of diuretic used to treat the same conditions are as follows:

- Loop diuretics (eg furosemide)
- Thiazides (eg bendroflumethiazide)
- Potassium-sparing diuretics (eg amiloride)

In every case, a little research would indicate that even diuretics (which you might imagine are unlikely to have adverse side-effects) are not entirely safe for everyone.

For example, HCTZ prevents your body from absorbing too much salt which would otherwise encourage the retention of water, but it can cause constipation, dizziness and nausea. Furthermore, because HCTZ reacts badly with many other medicines, it is absolutely essential to tell your doctor before starting to take any other kind of drugs if you use HCTZ. It is also not a drug that you can take if you suffer from liver disease, kidney disease, asthma, (certain) allergies or gout.

The diuretics that are generally prescribed in the UK are not a great





deal safer either. For instance, thiazides diuretics are usually considered to be moderately potent drugs that can cause stomach problems, weakness and dizziness when taken in higher dosages. In addition, because they upset the mineral balance in your body, they can lead to low levels of potassium or sodium which is likely to further exacerbate your already low mineral levels associated with PMS.

Then, there is the possibility that your doctor will prescribe painkillers which of course can range from relatively weak to extremely strong, and perhaps not surprisingly, the potential side-effects of each drug tend to be in proportion to the strength of it.

For instance, if your doctor recommends ibuprofen which is known by various brand names such as Advil, Motrin and Nuprin, the most common side effects include ringing in your ears, rashes, hot flushes, dizziness, drowsiness, heartburn, nausea, constipation and/or diarrhea.

To an extent, none of these potential side-effects is particularly dangerous, although in more extreme examples, drugs such as these can lead to stomach ulcers and people who already suffer from asthma are likely to encounter far more severe allergic reactions than they did previously if they are taking an [NSAID](#) like ibuprofen.

At the other end of the painkiller strength scale, you have stronger drugs like [Dilaudid](#) (a powerful opioid analgesic) and [Vicodin](#) that are equally likely to have stronger side effects as well.

In both cases, these side effects can include anxiety, constipation, labored or slowed breathing, sedation, sluggishness and vomiting. In addition, these drugs are also highly addictive so they should never be given or administered to someone who has an addictive personality or a pre-existing drug problem.

Basically, the golden rule with all of the drugs that your doctor might give you to deal with PMS is, you have to understand the potential adverse side-effects before agreeing to take them.

It is a fact that however 'safe' the pharmacological and pharmaceutical industry would have us believe that chemical drugs are, every chemical-based treatment carries the risk of some form of side-effect.

Hence, if therefore you are considering using drugs to deal with PMS, you must know what the side-effects are in advance of doing so.





## Other 'across the counter' treatments

Another option that many women with PMS might consider is the use of across the counter drugs to deal with their problems.

No doubt many women are tempted to use across the counter painkillers to offset the physical pain associated with PMS. However, before you do so, you should again understand that even widely available across the counter drugs do carry the risk of adverse side-effects.

For instance, NSAID's like ibuprofen and aspirin are widely available in drug stores and pharmacies but this does not necessarily mean that they are 100% safe because we again comes back to the fact that no pharmaceutical drug can be completely relied upon to be totally safe.

To highlight one very common example, aspirin comes in many different formats, often combined with other pharmaceutical drugs to form a slightly more powerful painkiller than it is when taken on its own.

Hence, whilst aspirin taken on its own will sometimes cause heartburn, nausea and an upset stomach, in more extreme situations, it can also cause breathing difficulties, tightness in the chest, bloody or black stools, severe stomach pain, unusual bruising, vomiting, nausea and dizziness.

Aspirin and other NSAID's can adversely affect the normal functioning of your kidneys, leading to greater levels of water retention (which as a PMS sufferer, you *really* don't need) and of course, as with most drugs, an overdose can be fatal.

If however aspirin is taken combined with Codeine (as an example), the common side effects 'list' can be extended to include constipation, drowsiness, dizziness, light-headedness, upset stomach and blurred vision. The less common side effects might also include difficulty following, heavy or labored breathing, severe drowsiness and unusual bleeding.

If you are thinking of buying Tylenol or Panadol and using it to control the physical pain that you suffer as a result of PMS, there are once again potential side-effects associated to consider. Although all nonprescription drugs are safe for 99% of people when taken in normal dosages, taking too much Tylenol can lead to serious liver damage, 16





whereas if the drug is combined with large amounts of alcohol, it can cause severe stomach bleeding and kidney damage as well.

Basically, even with nonprescription drugs, you still come back to the fact that all drugs carry the potential for adverse side-effects, even if they are widely available across the counter in drug stores and pharmacies and even if they have been available for over 100 years (aspirin was [first made in Germany](#) in 1897).





## **Dietary considerations for dealing with PMS**

Having considered many of the most common pharmaceuticals that are prescribed for dealing with PMS and why you should not really take them, it is time to start looking at ways you can deal with your premenstrual syndrome difficulties in a completely natural and non-intrusive way.

The first thing that you should consider is your diet and the way you eat your food, or more particularly, how often you do so.

The first thing to do in an effort to at least partially tackle your PMS problems through diet is to eat smaller amounts of food more regularly than you might otherwise do. If you eat two or three large meals a day several hours apart, your blood sugar levels will increase and then decrease by a significant margin which in many cases can exacerbate mood swings.

Consequently, if you change your dietary habits so that instead of eating two or three large meals every day, you eat several smaller meals every two or three hours, you maintain your blood sugar levels in a far more stable manner which should help to keep sugar-driven mood swings under control.

This works particularly effectively if you combine the habit of eating small on a more regular basis with additional fish oil in your diet either as a supplement or by increasing your consumption of oily fish like mackerel or salmon.

This is related to recent research which has suggested that the levels of chemicals known as [eicosanoids](#) seem to increase prior to the onset of a PMS attack. Essential fatty acids omega-3 and omega-6 (which are both found in significant quantities in fish oil) contain natural chemical compounds known as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) that is believed to control eicosanoid levels in the blood.

Consequently, making sure that you take on board sufficient levels of fish oil to keep eicosanoid levels in check is another effective way of minimizing the severity of PMS symptoms.

For similar reasons, it would also make sense to limit your intake of sugar too because doing so minimizes the risk of sudden sugar level spikes that could unbalance your disposition or mien.





Another thing about reducing your sugar intake is that it decreases the likelihood of suffering weight gain which in itself is likely to depress most women. One way of helping to control sugar cravings is by supplementing your diet with a Vitamin B supplement that also contains added chromium and magnesium.

In a similar way, reduce the amount of caffeine and sodium (salt) that you take on board as well.

In the first case, reducing the amount of coffee, tea and caffeine-rich soft beverages that you drink is good because not only does caffeine have a tendency to make people more excitable and 'jumpy', it also has the ability to reduce your bodies capacity for absorbing certain essential nutrients, and it can also exacerbate existing skin problems or even cause them as well.

In the case of reducing your salt intake, salt obviously encourages water retention which is something that you do not want to encourage. Water retention will make you feel considerably more bloated and uncomfortable when you are suffering PMS.

Another substance that you should avoid 'overdosing' on is alcohol as it is another that has the ability to rob your body of essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals, thus exacerbating your internal imbalance which will undoubtedly make your PMS symptoms worse.

Of course, cutting out caffeine, sugar, salt and alcohol is probably not something that most people want to do for a long period of time but if you only do it at the time of month when you are most susceptible to PMS, this represents a significant step in the right direction.

On the other hand, it will undoubtedly be even more beneficial if you can at least cut down on the amount of these substances that you consume every day. Having lower levels of them in your body on a permanent basis will certainly do your attempts to minimize the worst effects of PMS no harm at all.

As well as cutting out various substances from your diet, you should also consider making other changes too.

In this case however, what you should be thinking about is supplementing your diet to reduce the worst effects of PMS.

For example, you should try to eat a healthy, balanced diet at all times but especially at those times when you expect PMS to strike. 19





Instead of eating a diet that is rich in sugar, salt and caffeine, you should increase the levels of dietary fiber that you take on board whilst also ensuring that you get sufficient rest and sleep to keep your energy levels high.

Another thing that has been shown to be effective in combating the worst symptoms of PMS is Vitamin B and in particular, Vitamin B6. In combination with magnesium, manganese and chromium, this vitamin has been shown to be highly effective for controlling some of the worst excesses of the physical and psychological symptoms associated with PMS.

Consequently, you may find that your doctor prescribes a Vitamin B6 supplement but if he or she does not, it is something to buy and take to help control PMS when you feel your monthly blues coming on.

Other studies suggest that supplementing your diet with additional calcium (at around 1200mg per day) can be helpful for reducing the severity of PMS symptoms, whilst Vitamin E has also been indicated as effective for dealing with PMS symptoms in several studies.





## Herbal remedies for PMS

In addition to the dietary changes advocated in the previous chapter and the minerals and vitamins highlighted as recommended supplements, there are several herbal remedies and solutions that you can take which many women find helpful for alleviating the more severe symptoms of PMS.

As most women have a fairly good idea of when they can expect to suffer the first 'twinges' of PMS, they drink camomile tea two or three times every day for a week or two weeks before the anticipated onset of their PMS attack.

Not only is camomile tea famously calming, it is also a mild diuretic which will help to purge excess liquid from your body which in turn helps to reduce the unpleasant bloated feelings commonly associated with premenstrual syndrome.

There are stronger herbal diuretics available as well.

In this category, you should might seek out and take herbal extracts of dandelion, juniper or nettle, all of which will help your body to purge excess water in advance of PMS setting in. Try using dandelion extract or dried leaves as the basis of a tea because not only does this help to banish water from your body, it is also believed to help fight against urinary tract infections and cystitis.

There are many other natural substances that are also believed to have diuretic qualities as well. For example, green tea has been used as a natural diuretic foodstuff and drink in China for many centuries, whereas cranberry juice is also believed to aid your body in expelling water as quickly as possible as well.

Fennel is another substance that has diuretic qualities and as it is also believed to be a herbal remedy that helps to calm you down, it would be an ideal choice at those times when the worst of PMT sets in!

There are even some every day foodstuffs that have been shown to possess diuretic qualities as well. In this list, you would include asparagus, brussel sprouts, oats, cabbage, lettuce and tomatoes.

Hence, if in the 'lead up' to the time when you expect PMS to hit, you ensure that your diet is 'top-heavy' in these foods, you can help to minimize the chances of excess water retention (but of course, do 21





not use excess salt when cooking them!).

Unlike chemical-based diuretics, these totally natural water-banishing herbal remedies work by gently strengthening the ability of your kidneys to expel water from your body more quickly.

Consequently, using natural diuretics is far less likely to have adverse side-effects although you would be well advised not to go too crazy because expelling liquid from your body too quickly is not going to do you a great deal more good than banishing it too slowly is!

Natural herbal remedies do not only have diuretic qualities however. Many other benefits are attached to other herbal release which can help to offset the worst effects of PMS.

For example, brewers yeast ([saccharomyces cerevisiae](#)) is sometimes seen as being one of nature's super foods, and with some justification.

As suggested previously, it is generally agreed that vitamin B is extremely important for women who suffer from PMS and brewers yeast is an excellent source of all of the vitamins in the B group (except for B12). It is a very rich source of niacin and vitamin B6 which between them help to produce serotonin which you already know is important to aid your fight against PMS.

Not only this, it also contains several other vitamins, 16 amino acids and around 14 minerals including magnesium, chromium and manganese. Once again, I have already mentioned that having sufficient amounts of these particular minerals in your body is extremely helpful when fighting against premenstrual syndrome.

Both evening primrose and starflower oil are a rich source of gamma linolenic acid (GLA) which helps to regulate hormone balance and has also been shown to help reduce swelling, breast soreness, irritability and mood swings.

Evening primrose in particular is extremely effective for reducing abdominal swelling and breast soreness, whilst the acids in starflower oil also help to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels and skin complaints whilst also boosting your natural immune system.

As suggested earlier, one of the medical remedies that many doctors prescribe for PMS is an increase in progesterone levels in your body brought about by consuming or using hormone supplements in one





form or another.

Whilst many women might feel a little uncomfortable about the idea of taking chemically produced hormones in this way, it is interesting to note that there is a perfectly natural alternative available which you can use to achieve pretty much the same thing.

This is because the herb [wild yam](#) contains phytoprogestosterone, which is a totally natural form of progesterone that is highly effective for regulating the female metabolism.

Consequently, it is commonly used for treating conditions and symptoms related to the menopause and also as a natural alternative to using chemically produced hormones to reduce the severity of PMS attacks. On top of this, because of its antispasmodic and anti-inflammatory qualities, it is a herb that is often consumed to counteract the pain associated with conditions like arthritis as well as the pain associated with PMS.

Another natural substance that is used in premenstrual syndrome treatment is [Angelica sinensis](#) or Dong Quai which is a dried root that has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for hundreds of years to help women with menstrual problems. Because it is also one of the best non-animal sources of vitamin B12, Dong Quai is another herbal remedy that has a double benefit for any woman who suffers from premenstrual syndrome.

As you now know, many women who are suffering from PMS are prescribed Prozac, but in certain Western European countries, there is a totally natural alternative to Prozac that is in fact prescribed more regularly than the drug itself. This is because [St John's wort](#) has been shown to be every bit as effective as Prozac for dealing with stress, anxiety and depression but the potential adverse side effects of taking this totally natural solution are far less dangerous or invasive.

This is not to say that there are no potential adverse side-effects whatsoever, because in extremely rare cases, St John's wort has been seen to cause photosensitivity and minor stomach problems.

Nevertheless, the side-effects are usually compared to those of a placebo which in itself suggests that the dangers of taking St John's wort as an alternative to Prozac should be far less of a concern. In short, if psychological problems are a major feature of your PMS, St





John's wort is certainly worth a try.

One final natural foodstuff that might help some women offset the worst adverse effects of PMS are isoflavones which are most commonly found in soya beans and associated soya-based products.

Research on the effects of isoflavones has suggested that they could represent a viable natural alternative to the kind of hormone replacement therapy that is commonly used to deal with the menopause. However, given their effectiveness as a natural hormone replacement, including soya beans and soya products in your diet may very well help to reduce the worst effects of premenstrual syndrome.

It is no coincidence that whilst many Western women suffer when going through the menopause, it is far less of a problem in Japan where soya forms a significant percentage of the diet. Indeed, there is not even an equivalent word in Japanese for 'hot flushes' which most Western women become all too painfully familiar with when suffering the menopause.





## **Exercise to combat the worst of PMS**

In addition to making significant changes to what you eat and how you eat it in an effort to offset the worst effects of premenstrual syndrome, there are other modifications that you can make in your life which will help to achieve the same objective.

First and foremost, as stress and anxiety is a primary cause of PMS, you should do whatever you possibly can to minimize the amount of stress you suffer in your life on a day-to-day basis. For example, if you are someone who suffers very badly with PMS and you have a particularly stressful job, it might be time to think about a change of career direction.

We will look at many ways of trying to increase your relaxation levels as a way of fighting against PMS later in the report but the important thing is to review the way you live your life to see if you can minimize the levels of stress and anxiety that you suffer every day.

Similarly, do not put pressure on yourself by setting unreasonable goals or objectives as doing so achieves little other than increasing stress levels totally unnecessarily.

In addition, many experts believe that following a regime of regular aerobic exercise is also extremely helpful for minimizing the worst effects of PMS. For example, it is generally suggested that any woman who starts or accelerates a program of aerobic exercise is likely to see a diminution in water retention as well as a reduction in irritability levels and mood swings as well.

In this respect, it is sometimes suggested that you should exercise three or four times a week for a period of 30 minutes at least, indulging in exercise that raises your heartbeat of 120 beats per minute.

Obviously, if you're considering starting exercise in and you haven't done so for a long time or you have other medical problems, you should check with your medical practitioner that it is okay for you to begin a program of what is relatively strenuous exercise.

It is not only a reduction in the physical symptoms of PMS that women who start or accelerate an aerobic exercise program feel either. A study at the George Washington University carried out over 14 weeks on PMS sufferers who did aerobic exercise three times a week for a





period of 45 minutes each indicated that every single participant in the study showed decreased premenstrual anxiety and depression when compared to a test group who did no exercise.

In another trial carried out at the University of British Columbia, the staff took eight previously sedentary women and trained them so that they built up to running 12 miles a week in a period of six months. At the end of the trial, every one of the participants reported that they all felt lower levels of breast tenderness, less bloated and significantly reduced levels of anxiety as a result of their exercise program.

There is another benefit to conducting exercise as well because regular exercise is a great way of getting rid of your stress and tension too.

Furthermore, it boosts your metabolism and improves your circulation at the same time, whilst exercise also increases the [level of endorphins](#) that your brain produces too. Endorphins are neurotransmitters that increase your levels of happiness whilst minimizing pain, so for anyone who suffers PMS, increasing endorphin production is obviously a tremendous idea.

Another advantage of an aerobic exercise program is that it will also help to keep your weight down and it is generally accepted that carrying excess weight makes PMS worse.

As far as the best forms of aerobic exercise for reducing the adverse effects of PMS is concerned, it is generally suggested that moderate aerobic activities such as fast walking, jogging, cycling or swimming are the best forms of exercise if you want to reduce the worst effects of PMS.

Moreover, there is some evidence that aerobic exercise is better for reducing premenstrual syndrome symptoms than anaerobic exercise such as weight or strength training. For instance, one three-month study of 23 participants showed that the group who undertook aerobic exercise reported a far more significant fall in PMS symptoms at the end of the trial than did those who spent a similar amount of time weight training.

Another form of exercise that is rapidly gaining credibility as something that can help women who suffer from PMS to reduce the worst effects of the condition is yoga. There are a couple reasons for the increasing popularity of this ancient Eastern exercise art.





Firstly, it is widely accepted that practicing yoga is a highly effective way of reducing stress and anxiety levels and as has been suggested many times already, stress and anxiety are both primary precursors of PMS attacks.

The second reason why yoga can be extremely helpful for reducing the severity of premenstrual syndrome is that there are many poses which stretch and flex your body in a way that both reduces the tension in your limbs and muscles whilst also reducing the physical pain around your groin area. Passive stretches that reduce the pain in this particular part of your body will obviously help to minimize the worst effects of PMS, hence the effectiveness of yoga for counteracting the worst symptoms of the condition.

Here are a few of the poses that are generally believed to be effective for women who suffer PMS to practice:

[Kapalbhati](#) or the cleansing breathing pose: This pose is designed to help you clear your nasal passages of mucus and other congestants that will otherwise hinder your ability to breathe slowly and in a relaxed manner. This is a pose that is particularly helpful for reducing stress and anxiety because free-flowing, deep and easy breathing is a classic way of relaxing.

[Sukhasana](#) or the easy pose is the classical 'sitting cross-legged on the floor' yoga pose that most people probably naturally associate with this particular form of exercise:



However, the benefits of this particular pose are twofold. Firstly, it is a pose that promotes inner calm and serenity whilst also focusing on

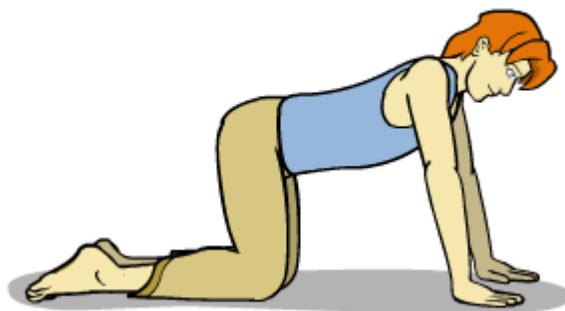




keeping your spine straight and your breathing clear.

Secondly, it promotes flexibility around your hip and groin area as well and as previously suggested, this is an effective way of reducing the physical pain that you feel in this part of your body as a result of premenstrual syndrome.

[Bidalasana](#) or the cat pose is one that teaches you to initiate movement from the centre of your body whilst coordinating your movement and your breathing at the same time:



This is a pose that involves movement in several stages, with the main focus once again being on the area of your body around your hips and pelvis. Hence, because of this focus, you are once again promoting flexibility and suppleness in the area of your body that is most affected by PMS associated physical pain.

[Dhanurasana](#) or the bow pose requires you to bend your body into a shape that resembles an archers bow, hence the anglicized name of the pose:



Yet again, this pose is designed to strengthen the muscles around your hips, groin and lower back whilst also increasing your flexibility and capacity for bending your body. It is essential to breathe deeply and slowly whilst getting into this particular position which again





helps you to relax and lose the stress and muscular tension which you might otherwise be feeling.

There are several other poses that are recommended for combating the worst symptoms of PMS such as the Cobra, Fish and Relaxation poses as well as the 'Final Corpse', but I'm sure that by now you have got the general idea of why and how yoga can help to reduce the severest PMS symptoms.

Let us therefore move on to consider other well established practices that will help you to relax and lose the stress in your life because as suggested, if you can minimize stress and anxiety, you stand a far greater chance of minimizing the worst effects of premenstrual syndrome too.





## Other well known ways of relaxing...

It is all very well being told that you have to relax and learn to lose your stress but it is another thing entirely to be able to do so at will. However, if you do not learn how to defeat stress and anxiety, your chances of being able to overcome the worst symptoms of PMS will be significantly reduced.

It is therefore extremely important to focus on how you can learn to overcome stress and anxiety any time you want to, which is exactly what you are going to learn to do in this chapter.

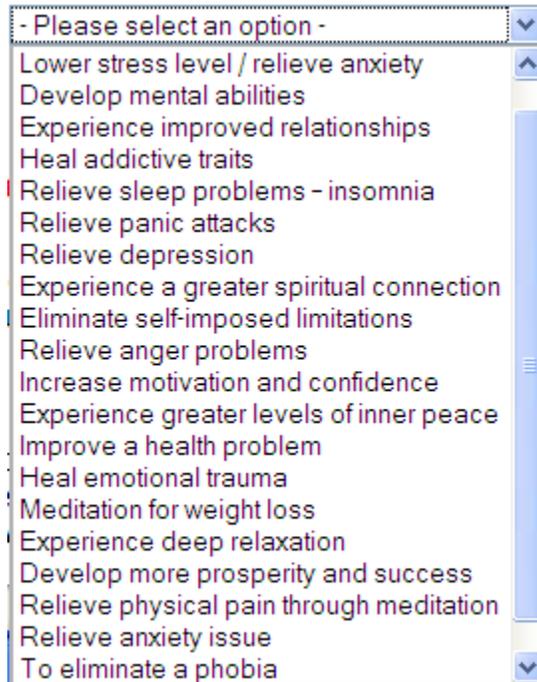
### **Meditation to help overcome PMS**

As mentioned, there are many different techniques and skills that you can learn that will help you to heighten your ability to overcome stress and tension so that you can relax more completely. One of the most famous and effective techniques is meditation which is renowned for being a practice that is almost completely focused on making participants relax.

However, the first thing to understand is that whilst a primary objective of meditation is about learning to escape the stresses and strains of everyday life, there are other objectives that mediation aims to satisfy as well and not all forms of meditation are exactly the same.

For instance, on the [Project Meditation site](#) where (at the time of writing) you can get a complete meditation training course absolutely without charge, there is a drop down box that shows you all of the different objectives people who take up meditation might have when they do so:





As you can see from this list, there are several of the alternatives offered that might apply to someone who is trying to escape the worst ravages of PSM. 'Lower stress levels/relieve anxiety', 'Relieve depression', 'Relieve physical pain through meditation' and 'experience deep relaxation' would all have relevance to someone who is attempting to escape PMS, so you should choose the one that feels most appropriate to you.

Whichever one you choose, you should definitely take advantage of the free meditation training materials on offer. If however this particular free course is no longer available, click the link below because at the time of writing there was plenty of [free information available there too](#).

Another alternative site where you can learn everything you need to know about meditation as a form of relaxation and stress relief is [how-to-meditate.org](http://how-to-meditate.org), where you can learn both the theory of why and how meditation works and exactly what you need to do to start meditating.

From the information on the site, it is relatively straightforward to learn how to get started with meditation and how to take things on to the next stage of achieving total relaxation through meditation once you have mastered the basics.





For instance, you can start by learning the basics of breathing meditation and the correct posture to adopt for meditating in the Buddhist fashion:

- Home
- Why Learn to Meditate
- Breathing Meditations**
- Transforming Meditations
- Lamrim: The Stages of the Buddhist Path
- How to Meditate on Lamrim
- Meditation Posture
- Loving Kindness Meditation
- Introductory Meditation Videos

After that, you move on to gain the realization of the 21 Lamrin meditations, which is a somewhat more advanced meditation technique and therefore considerably more relaxing than basic breathing meditation as well.

Of course, in most major Western cities, there are groups where you can study meditation as well as learning from the net at home in your own time. Some people undoubtedly gain more benefit from studying together with others as a group member, whilst others might prefer to learn on their own in the privacy of their own home.

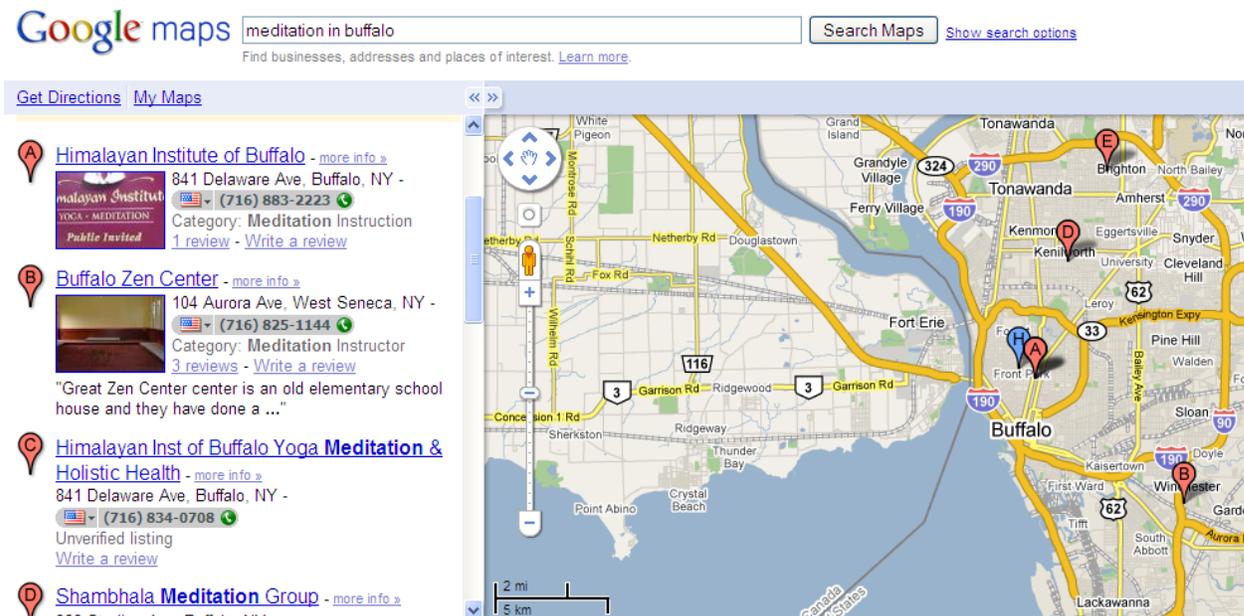
The approach that you adopt to learning to meditate is entirely a matter of personal preference but if you do want to find a local meditation group, try using [Google Maps](#) for your local city and type





'meditation' or something similar to see what is available locally.

If for example you were looking for a meditation group in Bufffalo, N.Y, you would type in 'mediation in buffalo' to see that you have several options available:



Incidentally, as can be seen from the information on the left-hand side of this screenshot, meditation centers are often combined with yoga groups as well, so you can tackle both in the same organized fashion with other people if you want to.

### **Deep breathing**

As was highlighted in the previous section, learning to breathe properly is an integral part of mastering meditation. However, learning to breathe correctly is another way of controlling your emotions that you can use as a standalone 'stress reliever' as well.

This works because once you have taught yourself to stand back at those times when stress or tension threatens to get on top of you, to take control of your physical and psychological being when the emotional temperature seems to be rising, it is possible to prevent any situation becoming a stressful one.

This is of course easier said than done, but the point is, it is not impossible to teach yourself the art of 'standing back and counting' 33





to ten' because thousands of people all over the world have done it before you, and it works for them!

In fact, I have discovered one way of mastering the ability to breathe deeply and slowly at those stressful times when logic dictates that your breath will be coming in short, rapid bursts that is extremely effective. Moreover, it is a great way of learning to control your breathing because once you have mastered it, breathing deeply and slowly at those times of greatest pressure and stress will literally become second nature!

Human beings are mammals and like all other mammals, we have many bodily processes or actions that we do not voluntarily control under normal circumstances.

You do not for example control your digestive processes although you can to an extent speed them up or slow them down depending on the amount and type of food you eat, the amount of exercise you take and so on. Nevertheless, processes like digestion and breathing are things that happen to us involuntarily 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You have probably heard of the great Russian physicist Ivan Pavlov, the man who in popular imagination is always associated with his dogs.

As a scientist, he considered the amount of control that we really have over what our apparently reflex actions. More specifically, he was curious about whether it might be possible to condition these mammalian reflexes to react in a certain way in response to specific stimuli.

Thus he carried out the famous Pavlovian experiment where for several weeks, he rang a bell immediately before feeding a group of dogs so that they began to automatically associate the bell with food.

Finally, he found that when he rang the bell, the dogs immediately began to salivate at the thought of what was to come, and their digestive processes kicked into overdrive too, even if he actually gave them no food whatsoever.

In effect, Pavlov demonstrated that it is possible to condition even those reactions over which you believe there can be no conscious control, hence we have the idea of conditioned reflexes courtesy of Pavlov.

This is where we come back to controlling your breathing as a way





of reducing your stress or anxiety levels because with sufficient training, it is [possible to condition your breathing](#) in exactly the same way! After training yourself to do so, your natural reaction to stressful pressure situations will be to calm down whilst starting to breathe deeply and slowly, thus putting you in control of things that you previously considered uncontrollable.

Although the idea of training yourself in this way may sound complex and difficult, it is in fact remarkably simple because there are dozens of things we do everyday almost without thinking. Apart from breathing, we walk, eat, drink, take a shower and so on without really giving it a moment's thought.

However, if every time you undertook one of these automatic activities, you consciously made yourself breathe deeply and slowly whilst doing so, it would soon become second nature to breathe in this way every time you undertook that same activity.

If for example every time you walk to the newspaper stand in the morning, you consciously made an effort to breathe deeply and slowly, you would quickly train your brain to associate that walk with slow, deep breathing and you would do it without thinking.

The same rule applies to stressful, tense situations. If you start by deliberately putting yourself in situations that you do not enjoy or that would normally cause stress (you can do this in the privacy of your own home with a little imagination) and force yourself to breathe deeply and slowly, you will gradually train your brain to associate unpleasant or stressful situations with deep, slow breathing.

Consequently, after two or three months, you would find that your natural reflex reaction to stressful situations would be to take a step back to breathe slowly and deeply without even thinking about it. Hence, you would have an automatic inbuilt defense against the kind of stressful situations that might previously have exacerbated your PMS problems.

And of course, this breath training can be combined with medication and/or yoga as well. In this way, you can construct a complete system of relaxation and bodily control that will inevitably enable you to deal with everything in life far more comfortably than you have ever been able to do previously.





### **Acupuncture for relaxation, stress and pain relief**

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese medical practice developed over two millennia that is based on the concept that within the body, everything travels around using channels or pathways which link various different parts of the body together.

Building on this concept, it is assumed that any kind of pain or problem, whether it is physical or a psychological thing, is caused by these channels becoming blocked so that the normal bodily balance is disturbed. In more modern times, it has been accepted (since the 1970s) that acupuncture really does have a positive impact on the body's pain regulatory system because it changes the processing of pain related information by the central nervous system.

Consequently, whereas not all that long ago, acupuncture was considered to be an alternative form of medical treatment, it is now much more widely accepted in the mainstream with many doctors including acupuncture in the range of pain solutions that they offer their patients.

Most people who have undergone acupuncture report a feeling of deep relaxation and pleasure after they have finished their treatment. Thus, even on this fairly peripheral level, it is clear that acupuncture has the ability to relax and de-stress any patient.

However, acupuncture also has the ability to be far more precise and targeted than this, with a skilled acupuncturist having the ability to deal with both localized physical pain and specific psychological problems by unblocking the bodily pathways that caused those problems in the first place.

For example, if one of your major PMS symptoms is a regular blinding headache, acupuncture can be used to deal with that specific problem and the same would apply if your main problem is abdominal pain or sore breasts.

Furthermore, whilst traditional acupuncture uses long thin needles to unblock the pathways, even if you have an aversion to needles (and many people do), acupuncture might still work for you because it is nowadays increasingly common to use electric probes rather than needles.

In fact, because electricity is far more controllable than needles





could ever be – you can turn an electrical current up or down for example – many patients report that acupuncture using electrical probes is even more relaxing and effective for killing pain than the traditional needle-based method.

Of course, unlike yoga, meditation or deep breathing, most people are not going to use acupuncture on themselves at home. For example, if you were using traditional acupuncture needles, puncturing yourself carries obvious dangers and even using electricity is not complete without risk, nor is it especially likely to be particularly effective either.

In short, if you would like to try acupuncture as a way of reducing the severity of your premenstrual syndrome symptoms, you need to find a fully qualified acupuncturist locally with whom you can discuss your problems and situation.

In this scenario, if you know any fellow PMS sufferers who have used acupuncture to deal with their symptoms, seek their advice before choosing any particular practitioner.

If you do not know anyone, there are many sites where you can find lists of qualified acupuncture practitioners (there are lists on the [American Academy of Medical Acupuncture](#), the [British Acupuncture Council](#) and the [AACMA site](#) for Australia) and using an appropriate list would be an easy way of finding someone locally who can help.

Finally, don't forget that you can use Google Maps to find almost anything you want in your locality, so this is another extremely efficient way of finding the information you need:





Google maps   [Show search options](#)  
Find businesses, addresses and places of interest. [Learn more](#)

[Get Directions](#) [My Maps](#)

- A** [Shen Dao Acupuncture-Elmwood](#) - [more info](#) »  
334 Bryant St # 2, Buffalo, NY -  
(716) 883-3166  
[Write a review](#)
- B** [Acupuncture, Chinese Medicine & Rehab Center](#) - [more info](#) »  
 4229 Maple Rd, Amherst, NY -  
(716) 803-8899  
1 review - [Write a review](#)  
"In just three months of combination of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, ..."
- C** [ADIO Acupuncture & Wellness Center](#) - [more info](#) »  
704 Beach Road, Buffalo, NY -  
(716) 984-0899  
[Write a review](#)  
[Coupons](#) »
- D** [Medical Care of Western NY](#) - [more info](#) »

## **Aromatherapy for taking the stress out of life**

Aromatherapy is an alternative form of health practice that uses essential aromatic oils to relax your body and soothe your mind making it far less likely that stress is a major factor in your life (and condition).

By taking a concentrated essential oil and mixing it with a carrier oil, you create a solution that has natural calming qualities which you can use as often as necessary when life gets on top of you.

There are several different ways of using aromatherapy, with the most common practices being to add essential oils to a warm bath or to use them in some form of burner so that the aroma is spread into the air.

In fact, essential oils in aromatherapy work in two different ways depending upon how you are using them.

The most obvious beneficial effect is via your sense of smell because essential oils stimulate your olfactory receptor cells which are then connected to a part of your brain known as the limbic system.

In turn, the limbic system is connected to your blood circulation and endocrine glands which play a major role in controlling bodily hormone levels. As suggested earlier, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that PMS is at least partially a result of hormonal imbalance. Hence, the fact that aromatherapy helps maintain steady hormone levels means that it can be directly beneficial for premenstrual syndrome sufferers.

Apart from the obvious benefits of stimulating your endocrine





glands through your sense of smell, it is also a fact that essential oils can be absorbed through your skin and into the bloodstream as well.

This is why adding a few drops of your aromatherapy solution to a warm bath is so effective. By doing so, you enable your body to absorb the aromatherapy oils into your blood from where they once again arrive at the endocrine glands.

The first thing that you need to do is choose a carrier oil which you combine with the essential oil of your choice to form your aromatherapy solution. There are a very wide range of carrier oils available (most of which are vegetable-based) including common oils like olive oil, grapeseed and sesame oils.

Check [the carrier oil list on this site](#) for more information about the ones that are most commonly used for this purpose, paying particular attention to the shelf life of the particular carrier oil you're considering.

Once you have decided on your carrier oil, you then need to select the essential oil that you are going to combine with it to make your aromatherapy solution. Amongst the most common oils that are used to minimize stress and tension are basil, bergamot, chamomile, jasmine, lavender and neroli. All of these should be available in your local herbalists or natural products store, although a little online research would no doubt turn up plenty of places where you can buy them on the net.

For most people, finding an aromatherapy solution that is effective for reducing stress and tension levels and even depression involves a little trial and error. However, as a startiner, a solution of olive oil and chamomile is always effective, as is grapeseed oil mixed with lavender.

Whichever solution you find works best for reducing the severity of PMS symptoms, try using it in the two different ways highlighted earlier as well. At the end of a long and stressful day, use a burner or a candle to infuse the air with the scent of your favorite essential oil before mixing three or four drops of the solution with your bathwater, ideally just before retiring for the night. You might also try putting a couple of drops on your pillow so you can continue to enjoy the benefits whilst you are asleep as well.

And as before, there is no need to do this all on your own if you do not want to. In most major cities and towns, there will be qualified





aromatherapists whose advice you can seek to make sure that you get maximum benefit from the very beginning, rather than learning as you go along. To find these people, try running a Google search for 'aromatherapy + your city' or you could try the Maps once again.





## Conclusion

All over the world, at this very moment, there are countless thousands of women suffering premenstrual syndrome who really do not need to do so.

However, as suggested in this book, turning to pharmaceutical drugs to deal with PMS is not an ideal solution either, particularly when there are many perfectly natural solutions which are extremely effective if they were only aware of them.

There is no doubt that premenstrual syndrome or tension is a problem suffered by millions of women all over the world, although fortunately, only a small percentage of sufferers are subject to a chronic condition which has a seriously adverse effect on the quality of their life every month.

As you have seen however, there are many ways you can 'attack' PMS using entirely natural solutions that will help to alleviate or even banish the worst symptoms of premenstrual syndrome once and for all.

As always, using natural treatments for PMS (or PMT) is always going to represent a better solution or answer than turning to potentially harmful drugs.

Knowing this, and having learned of all of the different solutions that are available, there really is no need to suffer the worst ravages of premenstrual syndrome any more.

