PMS and The Yeast Connection
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Pre-menstrual syndrome or PMS can make life miserable, momentarily or monthly, for 90 percent of American women. It's a mishmash of symptoms bloating, cramping, tender breasts, irritability, food cravings and a dozen other symptoms that can occur in the luteal phase of a woman's menstrual cycle (right after ovulation until the menstrual flow begins).

To the eternal aggravation of countless women through time, PMS can last as long as 14 days until menstruation begins.

PMS can be aggravated by:

- Stress
- Genetics
- Age
- The number of children a woman has had
- Alcohol consumption
- Sugar and caffeine intake
- Progesterone deficiency

Other dietary factors, lack of exercise, hypothyroidism and depression can also contribute to PMS symptoms that are severe enough to interfere with daily life for up to 40 percent of all women.

Listed below are some of the many symptoms of PMS:

- Abdominal bloating
- Acne
- Anxiety
- Backache
- Breast swelling and tenderness
- Cramps
- Depression
- Food cravings
- Fainting spells
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Altered sex drive
- Swelling of fingers and ankles
- Personality changes, including mood swings and outbursts of anger

Of course, these symptoms can be caused by many conditions, but when they are consistently linked to this specific time in a woman's menstrual cycle, they are usually grouped under the PMS label.

Scientific evidence now suggests that women who exercise regularly are less affected than sedentary women by the mood swings and depression often associated with PMS.

A Closer Look

Many doctors are now beginning to take a deeper look at PMS. Recurring and life-altering PMS warrants an investigation of the following:

- Thyroid function to determine if hyper or hypothyroid symptoms are interfering with hormone balance
- Insulin metabolism to determine if blood sugar fluctuations are triggering food cravings, fatigue, headaches and irritability
- Diet to determine if the patient is eating a diet high in sugar and refined and processed foods
The late Dr. William Crook, author of the Yeast Connect and Women's Health, suggested a connection between the systemic overgrowth of candida albicans yeast and PMS. He believed PMS develops as the result of a number of causes, among them yeast overgrowth.

Some researchers suggest systemic candida overgrowth may trigger PMS symptoms by activating an autoimmune response to sex hormones such as estrogen.

The normal rise and decline of estrogen in a monthly cycle could help explain the periodic flare-ups and subsequent quieting of candida symptoms, which can be remarkably similar to those of PMS mentioned above.

For women experiencing PMS discomfort who also had a high score on the yeast questionnaire, Dr. Crook suggested his special sugar-free anti-candida diet, oral antifungal medications and nutritional supplements could be life changing. A growing number of his colleagues are now beginning to agree with the connection between yeast and PMS.

As can be seen from the yeast questionnaire, women who have taken repeated courses of antibiotics, suffered recurrent vaginal yeast infections, taken birth control and/or had a diet high in sugar and processed and refined foods are at particularly high risk for candida yeast overgrowth.

**Learning to Eat Healthier**

Research shows that women most likely to suffer from PMS had some remarkable dietary parallels. They consumed more carbohydrates (62 percent), refined sugar (75 percent), dairy products (79 percent) and more sodium (78 percent) than women eating the standard American diet.

We suggest that women suffering from the symptoms of PMS consider the following anti-candida diet for one cycle and see if there is a difference in PMS symptoms. It is best to begin the diet at the end of the luteal phase, the day your period begins.

The first phase of the anti-candida diet involves eliminating all:

- Sugar
- Sweeteners
- Corn syrup (most fruit drinks are sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup)
- White bread and other white flour products
- Soft drinks
- Most ready-to-eat cereals
- All sweet, fat-laden snack foods

Foods containing these nutritionally deficient simple carbohydrates promote yeast overgrowth and literally feed the yeast organisms.

Replace all processed and refined foods with more vegetables of all kinds, including those you might normally eat. Avoid all fermented or mold and fungus-based foods, including soy sauce, vinegar, blue cheese and all types of mushrooms.

**Avoid and Replace**

Get rid of all hydrogenated fats and foods containing food coloring and additives. Add modest amounts of olive, walnut, flaxseed, sesame and other healthy unprocessed, unrefined oils for cooking and salad dressings.
Round out the diet with lean cuts of beef and pork, chicken, turkey, seafood, wild game, nuts and seeds. Modest amounts of high-carbohydrate vegetables, including potatoes (white and sweet), avocado, beans and other legumes, are permissible. Yogurt, hard cheeses and cream cheese can be eaten too.

For this experimental phase, avoid all fruit, which is high in the fruit sugar called fructose. It can be added back cautiously after the first month. Also avoid alcoholic beverages, coffee and other caffeinated drinks.

Charting symptoms, moods and general feelings of well-being over this month-long period can provide some powerful insights. Review the symptom chart. By the end of this phase, there should be a clear picture of the connection between diet and PMS symptoms.

For the next phase, certain foods can be gradually re-introduced. Experiment with fruit, brewer's yeast and vinegar one at a time to determine how they affect symptoms.

More explicit instructions about the challenge phase can be found at: 
http://yeastconnection.com/getting_eating.html#challenge

Probiotics (live "friendly" bacteria) are an essential part of the anti-candida program because they help restore the natural balance of intestinal flora, including yeast. Nutritional supplements like olive leaf extract and caprylic acid may also be helpful.

In extreme cases, prescription antifungal medications may be necessary while keeping on a candida-free diet and taking probiotics.

http://www.mercola.com/2004/jul/14/pms_yeast.htm