Diagnosis of Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

by Amy Scholten, MPH

En Español (Spanish Version)

Since premenstrual syndrome (PMS) includes a wide range of symptoms, a specific diagnosis may be difficult to make. Therefore, it is necessary to keep a record of your monthly physical and emotional symptoms. This will help your doctor to make an accurate diagnosis. The symptoms will most likely occur 1-2 weeks before you menstruate. When symptoms occur at about the same time each month, PMS is likely the condition.

Initial Assessment — Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and medical history. The timing of your symptoms and their impact on daily activities are extremely critical to consider. You may be given a questionnaire or a chart to keep track of monthly discomforts.

Physical Examination and Tests — A complete physical exam will provide important information. Although there is no single finding that confirms the diagnosis of PMS, your healthcare provider will want to look for signs that may indicate another specific medical problem such as thyroid disorders, diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, endometriosis, perimenopause (if you are over 40), or side effects of certain medications.

Psychiatric Assessment — Sometimes an underlying psychiatric disorder may be present, with symptoms getting worse during the premenstrual phase of your cycle. Screening for depression, anxiety disorders, or other mental health conditions may be recommended.

REFERENCES:
