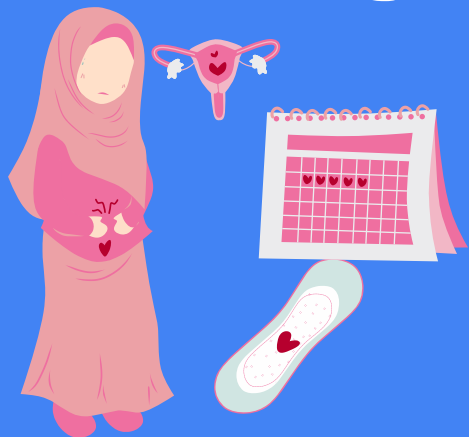


YOU ARE NOT OVARY REACTING

PART 1: PCOS, PMS & PMDD

IS MY PERIOD NORMAL?



Menstruating comes with its own set of symptoms. This can include cramps, bloating, breakouts, breast soreness, tiredness & mood swings. So how do you know if what you are experiencing is normal or if you may have a condition?

This post is here to explain period conditions including Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD). Check out part 2 to learn about period pain conditions including Endometriosis, Adenomyosis, Pelvic Pain. Both posts include some videos of people speaking about their experience living with these conditions.

If any symptoms mentioned resonate you, see a health practitioner who can help to identify if a condition is present and assist you with treatment or management.

POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME



Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is primarily characterised by having large and/or multiple cysts on one or both ovaries. These cysts cause imbalances of hormones called androgen and testosterone. This imbalance can cause symptoms such as acne and oily skin, excessive facial and body hair, hair thinning and balding, fertility difficulties, and periods that are irregular, heavy, long, absent, and/or unpredictable (often without ovulation). There is links between PCOS and weight fluctuation which can be attributed to metabolism issues, insulin resistance and mental health issues.

PCOS is a chronic condition and has no cure, but the symptoms can be treated and managed. Common treatments include hormonal contraceptives (eg. the pill or IUD), medications to reduce acne, unwanted hair growth and to control hair thinning, fertility treatments, and lifestyle changes.

Swipe to check out Alaina and Vaish's videos to hear about their experience living with PCOS.



PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is a term used to describe a combination of physical & emotional symptoms that many menstruating people experience about a week or two before their period.



As many as **three in four** menstruating people have experienced PMS symptoms in their lives.

PMS is often used as the punchline to many jokes and perpetuates a stereotype that periods make people act in 'overly emotional' and irrational ways. This, along with the dismissal of periods as a normal human function, adds to the stigma surrounding periods. Period stigma can cause shame and isolation, and can even disadvantage menstruating people and women from job opportunities and power.

END
the
STIGMA

PMS SYMPTOMS



Symptoms can include:

- mood swings
- breast tenderness
- food cravings
- bloating
- cramping
- constipation
- anxiety
- trouble concentrating
- insomnia
- headaches
- tiredness
- irritability
- depression
- muscle or joint pain
- diarrhoea
- sadness
- libido changes
- acne flareups

People can experience symptoms differently, ranging from little to no symptoms while others can experience more severe symptoms which keep them from enjoying or participating in some normal activities. Some people experience fluctuations in how they experience the severity of their symptoms throughout the time they are menstruating.

Severe PMS symptoms could be a sign of premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).



PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC DISORDER

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) is a severe form of PMS that causes emotional and psychological distress. It has the ability to impact normal activities in a person's daily life making them difficult to carry out. It can sometimes trigger thoughts of suicide and self-harm. For some, the symptoms can lead to struggles with relationships and friendships.

Experiences of PMDD are diverse and everyone can experience different symptoms from one another.

PMDD SYMPTOMS



Symptoms can include:

- extreme or sudden mood changes
- extreme emotional sensitivity
- irritability or anger
- depressed mood (feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty)
- anxiety
- feeling on edge
- little or no interest in normal activities (work, school, friends, hobbies)
- trouble concentrating
- brain fog
- tiredness & low energy
- appetite changes
- insomnia
- physical symptoms similar to PMS

PMDD can be diagnosed if someone had at least five symptoms for two or more menstrual cycles however, is often misdiagnosed as symptoms can be similar to other conditions such as bipolar disorder, thyroid conditions, personality disorders or depression.

TREATMENT & GETTING HELP

Treatment to ease or decrease the severity of PMDD symptoms can include changes in diet, regular exercise, stress management, vitamin supplements, anti-inflammatory medicines, selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors & birth control pills.

People with PMDD symptoms can often feel isolated, overwhelmed, scared or unsure if what they are experiencing is normal and that's totally ok. If you think you may have symptoms, book in to see your healthcare provider.

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide can call:

- Lifeline on 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800
- Yarn13 on 13 92 76 (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples)