

# PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME (PMS) I

By Dr. Cindy Williams

Have you ever suffered from pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS)? Perhaps you have experienced vague and hard to explain symptoms such as bloating, headaches, food cravings, fatigue, irritability, depression or backaches. These symptoms may even be severe enough to disrupt your life. If this describes you, you are not alone. Your symptoms are real and you are not crazy. Over 25 million women in the United States have suffered from PMS at some point in their lives.

PMS is not a “disease”. It is a syndrome. There are 150 (or more) emotional, physical and mental symptoms of PMS you may experience 2 weeks before your period. How do you know if you officially have PMS? According to Katherine Dalton, M.D., author of Once A Month, the definition of **PMS is the presence of any symptoms or complaints that regularly come just before or during early menstruation but are absent at other times of the cycle.** The three requirements for diagnosis are 1) symptoms must be present every month for at least three months 2) symptoms must be present premenstrual and cannot start before ovulation and 3) there must be complete absence of symptoms after menstruation for a minimum of seven days. Read about the treatment and management of these symptoms in the PMS II and PMS III articles.

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