

# Menstrual Diary to Monitor Premenstrual Symptoms

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A menstrual diary is a helpful tool for better understanding your premenstrual symptoms and then deciding how to treat them. Regardless of whether you have full-blown, diagnosable premenstrual syndrome (PMS), your menstrual diary can help you plan ahead for, prevent, and better cope with your premenstrual symptoms. You can plan to take extra good physical and emotional care of yourself during these difficult days. It also helps others to know that these premenstrual days are not a good time to expect you to be at your best.

If your PMS symptoms are mild, you can try home treatment measures. Many women find that making small changes in their lifestyle will improve their symptoms. If your PMS symptoms are more severe or persist with home treatment, talk with your health professional about treatment options. Many health professionals will want to see a menstrual diary of at least two menstrual cycles so they can determine which symptoms are most bothersome and recommend an effective treatment plan.

There are several types of menstrual diaries that record the following information every day:

- Daily physical symptoms
- How you feel and behave
- Your weight, especially if your symptoms include bloating, water retention, or food cravings

## Results of menstrual diary

Mild physical symptoms that occur just before menstrual bleeding and end when bleeding is done are considered a normal part of the menstrual cycle.

Symptoms that are present any time during your menstrual cycle, even if they get worse before bleeding begins, are not considered PMS; another condition, such as depression or anxiety, is likely to be present. However, it is useful for your health professional to know about such conditions, so that you can have the best possible treatment.

Symptoms that may indicate PMS:

- Occur between ovulation and the first days of menstrual bleeding.
- Stop after bleeding begins.
- Are not present for at least 7 days after your menstrual period.

It is important to keep a daily record of your symptoms to get an accurate diagnosis of PMS. It may take several months to see a pattern. Try some home treatment measures and note in your diary if they had any effect on your symptoms.

Below is an example of a daily calendar for recording your PMS symptoms for each day of the month. Be sure to record the precise dates of your period (menstrual bleeding) and ovulation, if possible, and the symptoms you have on those days. Mark whether your symptom is mild, moderate, or severe on each day.

Physical changes include:

- Breast swelling and tenderness.
- Bloating, water retention, weight gain.

- Changes in bowel habits.
- Acne.
- Nipple discharge when nipples or breasts are pressed. (Any nipple discharge that occurs when you aren't pressing on a nipple should be checked by a health professional.)
- Decreased sexual desire.
- Food cravings, especially for sweet or salty foods.
- Sleep pattern changes.
- Fatigue, lack of energy.

Emotional and cognitive symptoms include:

- Depression, sadness, hopelessness.
- Anger, irritability.
- Anxiety.
- Mood swings.
- Decreased alertness, inability to concentrate.

Changes in actions toward others include:

- Aggression.
- Withdrawal from family and friends.

Pain includes:

- Headaches or migraines.
- Breast tenderness.
- Aching muscles and joints.
- Cramps and low back pain prior to menstrual bleeding.

Next to each PMS symptom noted, record its daily severity with a score from 0 to 3 (0 being the absence of that symptom, 3 being most severe).

Day of month	Physical changes	Emotional changes	Actions toward others	Pain
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Day of month	Physical changes	Emotional changes	Behavioral changes	Pain
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
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22				
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31				



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