

# Does PMS Ignite Your BPD Symptoms?

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From the classic “Cathy” comic strip to any number of sitcoms, it seems like PMS (also known as “that time of the month”) has been shrugged off as the funny, quirky reason behind any sort of less-than-desirable behavior from a woman.

But, for up to 85 percent of women in their reproductive years, PMS is no laughing matter. Symptoms of PMS include depression, anger, irritability, sensitivity to rejection, a sense of feeling overwhelmed, and social withdrawal.

Add to that the physical expressions of PMS: fatigue, sleep disturbance, increased appetite, bloating in the abdominal area, breast tenderness, headaches, and muscle and joint pain.

Now, might all of the above cause stress? You bet. And it’s no newsflash that stress is a trigger for any mental disorder, including Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD).

In fact, the symptoms of PMS can intensify the already painful symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder. Studies have shown the following about BPD and PMS:

- Women with BPD often report that affective and impulsive symptoms worsen premenstrually
- Fluctuation in estrogen level may influence the expression of Borderline Personality Disorder symptoms
- BPD symptoms were most common in women using oral contraceptives and during times in the menstrual cycle when estrogen level is rising

## **Alleviating PMS Symptoms**

Borderline Personality Disorder affects 1 percent to 2 percent of American adults, and occurs in about one in every 33 women (a statistic much higher than that of its occurrence of one in every 100 men).

For a woman already struggling with symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder, “looking forward” to this added grocery list of misery on a monthly basis can make life feel unmanageable. But there are ways to counteract the stress-inducing symptoms of PMS.

The following tips may serve to give you a little bit of control over what you are experiencing so that your BPD symptoms don’t seem worse during certain times of the month:

- **Be aware of your body and mind.** Aerobic exercise is known to ease sadness and anxiety, symptoms common to both PMS and Borderline Personality Disorder. Aim for moving your body at least 30 minutes a day. Dance,

jump-rope, walk, whatever lifts your mood. On the flip side of that coin, don't forget the benefits of relaxation.

Yoga is known to calm the mind and the body, and help get them connected and working together.

- **Watch your diet.** During PMS, you may find yourself craving sugary or fatty foods. Those foods, along with the other usual suspects like caffeine and alcohol, will wreak havoc on the chemicals in your brain, resulting in the emotional highs and lows you want to avoid. To quash these cravings, work on getting your glucose levels steady by incorporating more whole grain complex carbohydrates in your diet and by drinking more water.
- Here's a big one: **quit smoking, or don't start.** Certainly this tip has health benefits that reach beyond that of quelling the symptoms of PMS, but a study of 10 years of health data gathered from more than 3,000 women showed that smokers were twice as prone to PMS symptoms than those who never smoked.

Whatever methods you use to alleviate your monthly PMS symptoms, try to differentiate if your behaviors and moods are a result of your monthly cycle or of Borderline Personality Disorder. If possible, track noticeable changes so that you can better pinpoint what is causing them in order to take the appropriate measures to alleviate them.

