

---

# PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC DISORDER (PMDD)

## What is premenstrual dysphoric disorder?

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) is a severe form of depression and is influenced by psychological and environmental factors.

The most obvious factor in the onset and offset of PMDD is the hormonal fluctuations that control the menstrual cycle and the impact of these on the brain.

But it is critical to underline that PMDD is a brain disorder, not a reproductive organ disorder.

While up to 80% of all women of reproductive age experience some physical, emotional or cognitive change associated with their menstrual cycle, PMS is on the less severe end of a spectrum of menstrual cycle related disorders.

At the other end of the spectrum is PMDD, which affects about 10 to 15 % of the reproductive female population and is a severe, debilitating depression with high morbidity and mortality.

## What are the symptoms?

PMDD is characterised by a rapid, sudden onset of symptoms, which also end abruptly.

The symptoms are associated with clinically significant distress or interference with work, school, usual social activities, or relationships with others.

### Symptoms may include:

- Marked affective lability (e.g., mood swings, feeling suddenly sad or tearful, or increased sensitivity to rejection)
- Marked irritability or anger or increased interpersonal conflicts
- Markedly depressed mood, feelings of hopelessness, or self-deprecating thoughts
- Marked anxiety and tension

### Other symptoms can also include:

- Decreased interest in usual activities
- Difficulty in concentration

- Lethargy
- Marked change in appetite; overeating or specific food cravings
- Insomnia
- A sense of being overwhelmed or out of control
- Physical symptoms such as breast tenderness or swelling; joint or muscle pain, a sensation of 'bloating' or weight gain

## Diagnosis

There are no specific laboratory investigations for PMDD.

However, it is important to perform tests for three reasons:

- to rule out other causes for PMDD symptoms;
- to obtain general health baseline measures prior to starting treatment; and
- to monitor general health once treatment is ongoing

## Treatment

Cabrini offers a new evidenced-based program for PMDD at the Lisa Thurin Women's Health Centre, Cabrini Elsternwick.

The Rapid Assessment Program for PMDD is a three-day assessment inpatient program and intensive treatment for women with PMDD, in an attempt to cease the cycle of decline/ deterioration of the protracted illness.

This program is targeted, evidenced-based and provides treatment including non-pharmacological therapies which have shown to support PMDD symptom reduction and improve social and occupational functioning, leading to an enhanced quality of life.

During the inpatient stay the client will be invited to attend a program which includes:

- **Dietary and Lifestyle changes (facilitated by a dietitian and exercise physiologist)** which focuses on education and practical strategies around exercise and diet in order to manage symptoms and enhance overall health.

- 
- **Psychological therapies (facilitated by a clinical psychologist)** we offer a stress management program incorporating relaxation and mindfulness, as well as an introduction to cognitive behavioural therapy to help manage any co-occurring mood and behavioural disturbances.
  - **Family meeting (facilitated by a trained mental health clinician)** this session aims to provide partners and family members with knowledge and tools to support their loved one with PMDD.
  - **Review of current pharmacological treatment**

### **Ongoing management post program**

Once the comprehensive assessment is conducted, treatment and therapeutic intervention commenced, we will collaboratively (patient/family) compile a treatment plan inclusive of identified goals, relapse prevention strategies and pharmacological intervention and liaise with for her GP/referrer to continue the ongoing treatment plus physical health checks.

We anticipate that follow up treatment will be mainly provided by the woman's primary care physician, however, the community program may be considered as additional ongoing support.

### **Want to know more?**

Contact your GP or visit [www.cabrini.com.au/wmh](http://www.cabrini.com.au/wmh)