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JUNE 2021

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Your health

Q & A



You asked: "I suffer with bad PMS. Can you suggest any natural ways to reduce the symptoms?"



MICHELLE SANCHEZ ANSWERS: "Keeping your blood sugar levels balanced is essential for hormone health. Cut out sugar, refined carbohydrates (bread, pastries, cakes, cereals, pizza), processed/junk foods, high sodium (salty) foods, artificial sweeteners, fizzy drinks, juices (unless freshly squeezed) as these foods/drinks exacerbate PMS symptoms. Reduce your meat consumption and avoid dairy products as they are inflammatory and can worsen PMS symptoms. Eat a more plant-based diet with plenty of fresh vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds and whole grains. Include lots of cruciferous vegetables in your diet (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, Brussel's sprouts) as they are rich in the phytochemical Indole-3-Carbinol, which helps the body metabolise excess oestrogen. Healthy fats (avocado, nuts, seeds) are also important for sex hormone production. Cut out coffee and avoid alcohol as both of these habits are highly inflammatory and can disrupt sleep. Studies suggest that drinking more than one alcoholic drink per day can increase the risk of PMS symptoms by 79 per cent as alcohol disturbs hormone production. Up your intake of magnesium and B6 via food or supplementation as they are important nutrients for blood sugar balance, reducing anxiety, stress, cramping, headaches, moodiness and irritability. Reduce your stress levels by making time to relax as stress can worsen PMS symptoms, especially two weeks prior to your period. Chaste tree (Vitex agnus-castus) is an excellent herb for balancing hormones and regulating the menstrual cycle. It can also reduce prolactin levels which is a hormone linked to PMS. Chaste tree can be taken as a tablet, capsule or in liquid form."

■ Michelle Sanchez is a Naturopath, Nutritionist and Medical Herbalist. The award-winning College of Naturopathic Medicine is the No.1 Training Provider in Natural Therapies such as Nutrition, Herbal Medicine, Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Natural Chef and Health Coach. Train online or in-class. Call 01342 777 747 or visit cnmcourses.com



You asked: "I have read about preeclampsia and I am so nervous about it causing complications in my pregnancy. Is there anything I can do to prevent it from happening?"



MEAGHAN ESSER ANSWERS: "Preeclampsia affects approximately 5 to 8 per cent of pregnant women. While you shouldn't assume it will happen to you, it's a good idea to try to prevent it wherever possible.

Magnesium has been used as a successful treatment for preeclampsia for years, so it makes sense that supplementing with magnesium – before and during pregnancy – may help to prevent this condition. Magnesium helps to regulate blood pressure and promotes relaxation in the body. As preeclampsia is characterised primarily by high blood pressure (and umbilical convulsions when left untreated), it is easy to understand why magnesium is so beneficial for this condition.

Many pregnant women also suffer from muscle spasms, constipation and restless sleep – obnoxious side effects of pregnancy that adequate magnesium intake can help to manage.

A growing foetus requires a plethora of nutrients, and it's common for pregnant women to lack sufficient magnesium for both mother and baby. While a prenatal multivitamin should help to prevent deficiency, many forms of supplemental magnesium are not well-absorbed, and many prenatal supplements do not include a quality form of magnesium. Taking an extra dose of a highly bioavailable magnesium supplement, such as ionic magnesium citrate powder or pure magnesium bisglycinate, can help to ensure you are getting an adequate amount of magnesium throughout your pregnancy."

■ Meaghan Esser is a Registered Holistic Nutritionist with ITHL Health Limited. For more information, visit www.ithlhealth.co.uk

You asked: "I have been working from home since the first lockdown. It's now been a year and I'm noticing whenever I have a break I end up in the fridge or rifling through the cupboards for food. What can I do to break this habit?"



MARGARET BELL ANSWERS: "It's very tempting to reach for snacks etc when you're working from home. Emotional eating is simply eating when you're not physically hungry, so if you're not feeling the grumble in your stomach or the feeling of emptiness, chances are it's emotional 'head hunger' you're feeling and that type of hunger can never be satisfied with food. If you find yourself going to the fridge or cupboard, ask yourself: 'Am I physically hungry?' If you are, then have something to eat; if you're not, then see what else might need emotionally feeding. Simply asking that question can be enough to jolt you out of the mindless action of opening the fridge or cupboard and bring you back into the room. This won't always work and that's fine. Stay curious about why you made the choice to eat when you were not hungry.

When you're able to step away from the fridge or cupboard, take a few minutes to see what really needs feeding. To do this, I go through a mind, body and heart scan, noting what I am feeling physically, mentally and emotionally. It's when you take your time to do this on a regular basis you will get to know what is really going on and why you are reaching for food while not feeling that physical hunger. That is the first step to overcoming emotional eating and starting on the intuitive eating path."

■ Margaret Bell is a nutritionist who specialises in emotional eating. She works with people who are struggling to gain a healthy relationship with food. Margaret's first recipe book **True Taste** is available now, and can be ordered here: www.naturallyempoweredhealth.com/true-taste-e-book

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