



...FOR A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE WITH PMDD & PME CAN NOT ONLY

survive but thrive

WHAT IS PMDD?

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) is a **cyclical**, hormone-based mood disorder with symptoms arising during the luteal phase (the second half) of the menstrual cycle each month and subsiding within a few days of menstruation. PMDD may be mild, moderate, or severe and the length of time symptoms will be experienced each month will vary from person to person.

PMDD is a chronic condition - The World Health Organization recognizes PMDD in the ICD-11 as an official international diagnosis. PMDD is commonly misdiagnosed as **Bipolar Disorder** due to the cyclical nature of mood changes.

WHAT CAUSES PMDD?

PMDD is a **severe negative reaction** to the natural rise and fall of estrogen and progesterone that happens each month between ovulation and menstruation. It is a suspected hormone sensitivity **in the brain**, and research is still ongoing to pinpoint the exact causes of symptoms. **Those with PMDD are at an increased risk for suicidal behavior.**

AN ESTIMATED 5.5% OF WOMEN/AFAB OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE HAVE PMDD

HOW YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT

Further study can be demanding and stressful. Paired with the addition of perhaps being away from home for the first time, managing finances, and perhaps having a part-time job - it can be a **turbulent** time for some. PMDD symptoms can be debilitating and overwhelming and can also be exacerbated by stress. Your support at this time can be invaluable.

GUIDE students to any additional disability support available at your school/university.

REFER them to any local services for wellbeing care and appropriate welfare checks.

SIGNPOST them to policies and guidance within the college/university uni with them to ensure reasonable adjustments are put into place so your student can better manage their workload.

ASSIST students in planning their schedule around their cycle - preparing in advance for any deadlines or stressful times so they can get ahead.

HELP them advocate for themselves in a new school structure if they are struggling.

ACKNOWLEDGE the impact the condition can have on a person - PMDD is hugely under-recognized, and your support in validating this experience can make a big difference to your student.

PMDD IS NOT PMS AND IT IS NOT A CHOICE.



Get free resources and support at iapmd.org

SYMPTOMS OF PMDD

- **Mood/emotional changes (e.g., mood swings, feeling suddenly sad or tearful, or increased sensitivity to rejection)**
- **Irritability, anger, or increased interpersonal conflicts**
- **Depressed mood, feelings of hopelessness, feeling worthless or guilty**
- **Anxiety, tension, or feelings of being keyed up or on edge**
- Decreased interest in usual activities (e.g., work, school, friends, hobbies)
- Difficulty concentrating, focusing, or thinking; brain fog
- Tiredness or low-energy
- Changes in appetite, food cravings, or overeating
- Hypersomnia (excessive sleepiness) or insomnia (trouble falling or staying asleep)
- Feeling overwhelmed or out of control
- Physical symptoms such as breast tenderness or swelling, joint or muscle pain, bloating or weight gain

A diagnosis of PMDD requires the presence of at least five of these symptoms, one of which must be a "core emotional symptom" (in bold).

HOW PMDD CAN AFFECT STUDIES

PMDD causes **emotional symptoms** which can present in a number of ways - your student may appear to have a very low mood, be withdrawn, seem overwhelmed, irritable, and teary. **Cognitive symptoms** such as brain fog and difficulty concentrating can make it hard to focus and work as effectively as usual.

Physical symptoms such as fatigue, joint pain, and sleep issues (sleeping too much or too little) can also take their toll.

All of the above can have an impact on attendance and on the quality of work being completed. PMDD symptoms are only present for part of the month (though the length of symptoms will vary from person to person - lasting from a few days to a couple of weeks each month). You may notice a regular **on-off pattern** in attendance due to this.

30% OF THOSE WITH PMDD WILL ATTEMPT SUICIDE

Learn more at iapmd.org/about-pmdd

"Having a supportive member of staff on your side you are battling with a serious, chronic condition like PMDD can have such an impact - it can make the difference between a student dropping out of school, or them graduating and reaching their potential in life. I would urge all educators to have compassion and advocate for the student if they are finding it difficult to navigate the school/ university system to get support"

- Rachel, IAPMD Youth Advisory Board Chair

