

Pre-Menstrual Tension

Information Sheet

Pre-Menstrual Tension (PMT), includes a range of symptoms which are experienced before and during menstruation, such as bloating, cramping and mood swings.

Symptoms are generally caused by an imbalance in the reproductive cycle which occurs each month. Although the ovaries produce the reproductive hormones (oestrogen and progesterone), their functioning is actually governed by the pituitary gland which is situated in the brain. For this reason, relaxation and meditation techniques are often useful in regulating the hormonal fluctuations which occur and so alleviating negative symptoms.

Causes

- **Tension in the pelvis**

This in turn creates the imbalance in the reproductive cycle by reducing circulation of blood to the ovaries.

Tension in the pelvis can be caused by:

- ⇒ poor posture
- ⇒ lack of movement
- ⇒ restrictive clothing
- ⇒ stress

Yoga postures and the releases are invaluable here. They massage and tone the ovaries and other internal organs, improving blood flow to the area and improving their function. See overpage.

- **Emotional stress**

Anxiety, fear, frustration and repression can also cause imbalance due to their effect on the pituitary gland. Breathing, relaxation and meditation techniques are very helpful in reducing stress levels and balancing the main controller – the pituitary gland. See overpage.



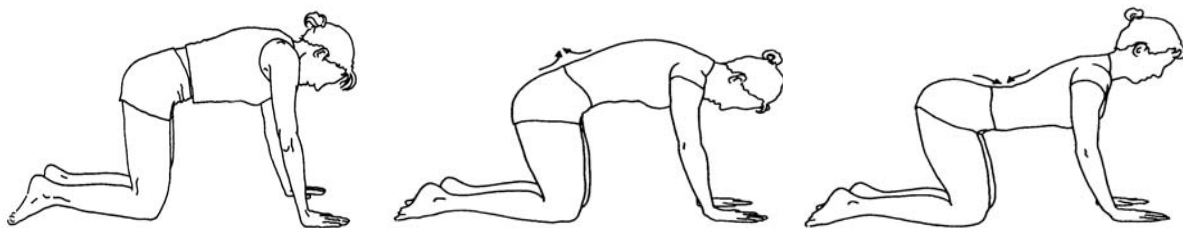
What you can do

Postures and exercises:

Unless you have been attending classes for a long time, and are very familiar with the exercises, please ask your instructor for guidance.

Except for the half shoulder stand, these exercises can be done at any time (except after eating – wait at least one hour). However, during your period it's best not to do any strenuous exercise, so be gentle and focus on the breathing and relaxation.

- **Cat and Cow** (Marjariasana): Come onto all fours, with the hands underneath the shoulders and the knees underneath the hips. Breathe out as you round the back, pulling up between the shoulder blades and tucking the chin in. Breathe in as you arch the back the other way and look up toward the ceiling. Rest in Yoga Mudra (child position): kneeling with the forehead resting on the floor, arms stretched out in front or by the sides.



- **Butterfly pose** (Baddhakonasana): This can either be done sitting or lying on the back. Bring the soles of the feet together and have the knees out to either side. Gently bounce the knees as you breathe into the belly. If sitting, try leaning forward bringing the chest toward the floor.
- **PMT release:** Lying down with the feet flat on the floor and wide apart and close to the buttocks. If it is comfortable then hold onto your ankles. As you breathe out take one knee downwards and inward toward the floor, whilst the other knee remains pointing to the ceiling. Breathe in as the knee comes back up and swap sides.
- **Trikonasana** (Triangle pose): Ask your instructor.
- **Vipareeta Karani asana** (Half Shoulder stand): Probably the most useful posture you can do, but is fairly advanced, so ask your instructor about the releases and how to perform. Do not do during your period.

- **Moolabandha:** a gentle tightening of the pelvic floor muscle, like what you would do if you wanted to stop the flow of urine mid stream. Breathe in as you tighten and as you breathe out relax the muscles. If you suffer from incontinence then it would be best for you to exhale as you tighten and relax on the inhale. Once you are used to the practice you could maintain the tightness as you continue to inhale and exhale.

Breathing and relaxation techniques:

- **Belly Breathing:** Imagine that you have a balloon in the belly which expands as you breathe in and empties as you breathe out. Focus your attention on any sensations that you can feel in the pelvis and lower back as you breathe into the belly.
- **Alternate Nostril Breathing:** This stimulates the pituitary gland and balances the left and right brain hemispheres. See your instructor for guidance.
- **Yoga Nidra:** This is a powerful relaxation technique which involves bringing the awareness to different parts of the body in a set sequence. ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR ABOUT A YOGA NIDRA CD.
- **Yoga is about awareness:** Just to become aware that your body, mind and emotions are constantly in a state of change, can help you to cope. If you know you get tired before your period, then let yourself rest (this may mean learning to say 'no'). Remember that these symptoms pass.

Other Options

- ⇒ Make sure that you drink sufficient water during the day, 1-2 litres a day. Dehydration can make symptoms more severe.
- ⇒ Essential Oils: Clary Sage.
- ⇒ Shiatsu Massage or self massage of acupuncture points such as the Kidney 1 point on the sole of the foot - ask your instructor. This is not only good for reproductive disorders, but increases vitality and energy and helps one to cope with shock.
- ⇒ Consult a doctor or naturopath or biochemical doctor to check vitamin and mineral levels and general health.

