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ADHD, hormones and you

Understanding ADHD across the menstrual cycle, PMDD, and perimenopause

Why hormones matter

Hormones such as **oestrogen** and **progesterone** affect the brain systems involved in ADHD. This means your ADHD symptoms may naturally change at different times in your cycle or during perimenopause.

1. ADHD and the menstrual cycle

What many people notice:

1. Harder to concentrate the week before a period.
2. More irritability, overwhelm or emotional swings.
3. Feeling more impulsive.
4. Medication feeling ‘less effective’.
5. Brain fog or fatigue.
6. Feeling back to normal once the period starts.

These symptoms often happen when **oestrogen drops** in the days before a period.

2. PMDD and ADHD

Some people experience **Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)** – a severe form of premenstrual symptom.

Signs include:

1. Intense irritability or anger.
2. Feeling very low, tearful or overwhelmed.
3. Feeling ‘not yourself’.
4. Symptoms that improve once the period begins.

If this sounds familiar, please talk to your GP and discuss with your prescriber – specialised support is available.

3. ADHD and perimenopause

Perimenopause usually starts in the 40s (sometimes earlier). Hormone levels change a lot during this time, which can make ADHD symptoms feel worse.

People often report:

1. New or worsening forgetfulness.
2. Losing words or ‘brain fog’.
3. Difficulty concentrating.
4. Increased overwhelm, anxiety or irritability.
5. Sleep problems.
6. Nighe sweats or hot flushes.
6. Irregular or changing periods.

If you previously managed well with ADHD, perimenopause can sometimes make things feel much harder – this is common, and help is available.

4.Treatment options

ADHD medication

ADHD medication still works during times of hormonal changes.

If symptoms worsen with your menstrual cycle:

- Some people benefit from a **slightly higher dose in the week before their period**.
- Others add a small **short acting dose** during difficult days.
- Tracking symptoms helps identify what works best for you.

Your clinician will guide you, as this will always be personalised to your circumstances. As this information can take time to gather, it may need to be reviewed at your next Annual Review.



Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)

If you are in perimenopause, HRT can help with many symptoms, including:

- Sleep.
- Hot flushes.
- Mood symptoms.
- Brain fog.

When hormones are more stable, ADHD medication may work better too.

Your GP or menopause specialist can advise if HRT is right for you.

5. Hormonal contraceptives and mood

Some hormonal contraceptives can increase the risk of **low mood or depression** for some people.

If you notice changes in mood, anxiety, or ADHD symptoms after starting a contraceptive, please speak to your GP or clinician – there are many alternatives.



6. What you can do

Track your symptoms

Helpful apps:

- **Balance** (perimenopause and menopause).
- **Me vs PMDD** (premenstrual dysphoric disorder).
- **Clue** (menstrual cycle tracking).

Tracking helps you spot patterns and tailor treatment.

This information can be gained before initial assessment, whilst waiting on the treatment waiting list, after the end of titration process, or before Annual Review.

Lifestyle support

These approaches can make a noticeable difference:

- **Regular exercise** (especially strength training, ideally minimum twice a week).
- **Good sleep routines.**
- **Balanced meals** and steady blood sugar.
- **Limiting alcohol and caffeine**.
- **Stress-reduction techniques** (mindfulness, breathing, yoga).



Supplements

Some people find benefits from:

- **Omega-3**.
- **Vitamin D** (if deficient).
- **Magnesium** (for sleep and relaxation).
- **Creatine** (for energy and cognition).

These are optional – talk to your clinician before starting anything new.

7. When to seek help

Speak to your clinician or GP if you notice:

1. Sudden worsening of ADHD symptoms.
2. Mood symptoms around your cycle that feel severe.
3. Signs of perimenopause affecting daily life.
4. Concerns about medication or side effects.
5. Low mood after starting hormonal contraception.

You don't have to figure this out alone.

8. Useful resources

British Menopause Society	Information and guidance	Click here
Menopause Matters	Practical advice	Click here
IAPMD	Support for PMDD	Click here

You're not imagining it – and you're not alone.

Understanding the link between hormones and ADHD can help you feel more in control. With the right support, treatment, and tracking, it is possible to feel better and function at your best