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MARCH 2013 | fresh ideas for everyday health

## SUPPLEMENT AWARDS

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(FROM PLANTS!)

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FOR SIMPLE SKIN CARE

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GLUTEN-FREE  
MILLET

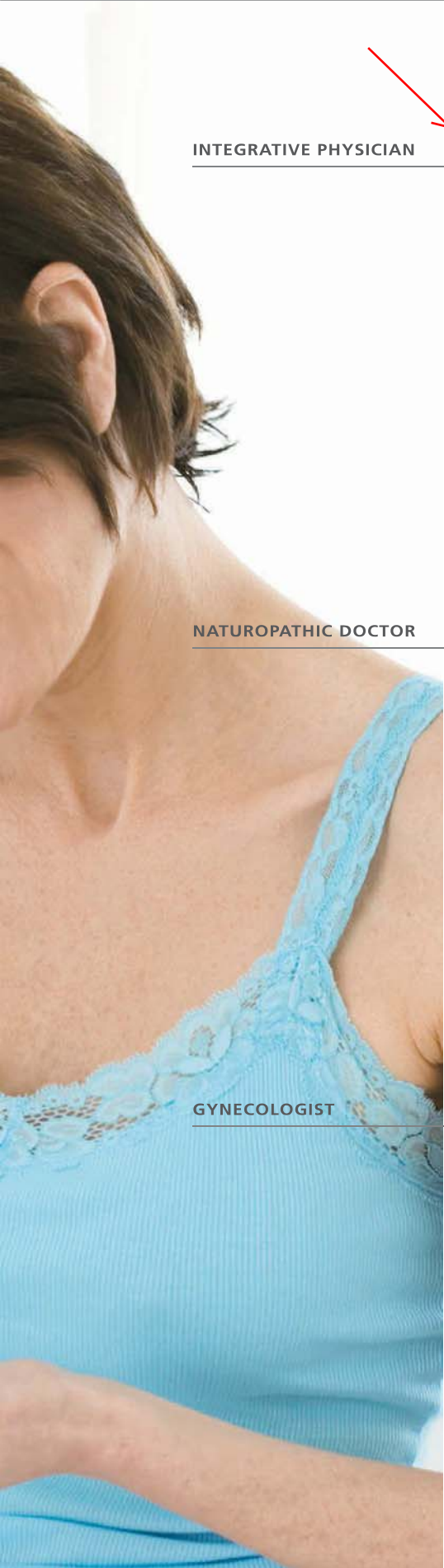


& 5 on-the-go snacks  
at [deliciousliving.com/mar13](http://deliciousliving.com/mar13)

INTERVIEWS BY TRAE LEWIS

# Ease PMS

If you're plagued by bouts of acne, cramps, or irritability every month, you're not alone. Eighty-five percent of U.S. women experience at least one premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptom each month, according to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. PMS causes are not completely understood, but experts believe the biggest culprit is the roller coaster of hormone fluctuations that occur prior to your period. Try these simple, natural steps to help relieve PMS.



#### INTEGRATIVE PHYSICIAN

Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, author, *Beat Sugar Addiction NOW!* (Fair Winds, 2010), Kona, Hawaii

**Track your symptoms.** Determine how serious your symptoms are by recording them in a diary for two consecutive months. Compare the intensity of your symptoms on days five through ten of your cycle (day one starts on the first day of your period). If your symptoms are PMS-related, their intensity will usually increase by 30 percent in the six days before menstruation.

**Understand cravings.** Progesterone, a hormone that stimulates the brain chemical GABA, calms you, encouraging sleep. During your period, your progesterone levels drop, sometimes creating a deficiency, which can trigger sugar cravings. Shortly after indulging, your blood sugar plummets, leaving you anxious and wanting more.

**Take vitamin B6 and magnesium.** Combining magnesium with vitamin B6 can ease PMS. Vitamin B6 raises levels of prostaglandin E1, a feel-good hormone that, when lacking, can lead to irritability. Magnesium may reduce sugar cravings and encourage deeper sleep. Take 200 mg vitamin B6 and 100–200 mg magnesium per day.

#### NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR

Corinne Harpster, ND, Laurel Natural Medicine, Kirkland, Washington

**Eat vegetables.** Crucifers like broccoli, cauliflower, kale, brussels sprouts, cabbage, and collard greens contain compounds called indole-3-carbinol, which helps the liver flush out excess estrogen—a likely cause of PMS. Try eating a pound of crucifers per day: Incorporate sautéed kale and collards into your breakfast omelet, eat broccoli florets and hummus with lunch, and fill half your plate with roasted brussels sprouts for dinner.

**Lift depression.** St. John's wort fights symptoms of PMS-related mild-to-moderate depression. This powerful herb contains two healing compounds, hypericin and hyperforin, which are believed to inhibit breakdown of several mood-regulating neurotransmitters, including serotonin. Take 300 mg St. John's wort, three times per day with meals.

**Meditate regularly.** When practiced properly and often, meditation can mitigate negative thoughts and emotions, calm nerves, and encourage comfort and relaxation. Studies show those who meditate are able to shift brain activity from the stress-prone right frontal cortex to the calmer left frontal cortex.

#### GYNECOLOGIST

Lovera Wolf Miller, MD, coauthor, *Womenopause* (O-Books, 2010), Michigan City, Indiana

**Increase heart rate.** One of the best ways to fight PMS is to get moving. Exercise that elevates your heart rate improves circulation, which combats premenstrual fatigue and lethargy. Plus, working out releases mood-boosting endorphins. Work out first thing in the morning; aim for at least 150 minutes per week (around 30 minutes every day) of cardio, such as running, swimming, or cycling.

**Balance hormones.** Irregular periods can result when hormonal signals are thrown out of sync. Staying hydrated helps, so avoid dehydrating caffeine, chocolate, and carbohydrates. Prevent stress-related cortisol spikes by spending ample time with friends—a proven relaxant.

**Know when to seek help.** PMS symptoms range in intensity from mild to severe, and sometimes they can even interfere with your ability to function well in everyday activities. When PMS affects work, sleep, or relationships, consult a health care provider to tailor your treatment plan. 📌