

[IMAGE]

Vegetarian Diet May Reduce PMS Symptoms

Women and men share many of the same health concerns. However, women must also contend with specific health issues raised by their female physiology: painful menstruation (dysmenorrhea) and premenstrual syndrome (PMS). PMS symptoms have long been associated with hormonal changes, particularly elevated levels of estrogen. It has been hypothesized that plant-based diets may help bind estrogen, thus reducing PMS symptoms. To test this hypothesis, 33 women followed a low-fat, vegetarian diet for two menstrual cycles, then followed their customary diet for two additional cycles while taking a supplement placebo pill.

The dietary regimen included grains, vegetables, legumes and fruits; animal products, fried foods, avocados, olives, nuts, butter and seeds were prohibited. Results showed that duration of PMS symptoms and pain intensity (particularly behavior changes and water retention) were significantly less during the diet phase compared with the placebo phase. Levels of "serum sex-hormone binding globulin," a protein known to reduce estrogen in the bloodstream, were higher during the diet phase.

So what can you do about PMS? As these findings suggest, PMS symptoms may be mediated by dietary influences, specifically a diet high in fresh fruits and vegetables, beans and whole grains, and low in fats, salt, sugar and caffeine. Consult with your doctor for more information.

Reference:

Barnard ND, Scialli AR, Hurlock D, et al. Diet and sex-hormone binding globulin, dysmenorrhea, and premenstrual symptoms. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, Feb. 2000: Vol. 95, No. 2, pp245-50.

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