

# PROACTIVE WITH PMS

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) is a combination of physical and emotional symptoms that can occur the week before menstruation due to changing hormone levels. PMS affects women differently, but common symptoms include bloating, cramping, fatigue, headaches, and food cravings. These symptoms can be challenging when it comes to navigating a nutrition plan.

## HOW PMS MAY AFFECT YOU

### WEIGHT FLUCTUATIONS

It is common to see an increase on the scale as the body retains more water.

### CRAMPING & GI STRESS

Premenstrual hormonal changes cause the uterus to contract which can cause cramping and pain in the abdomen. These hormones may act on the gastrointestinal tract as well, causing GI stress such as bloating, gas, constipation, or diarrhea.

### CRAVINGS

Many women report cravings for specific foods.

### DEPRESSION & FATIGUE

These feelings are more common for many women during PMS. Regular exercise has shown to help reduce these symptoms for a lot of women.

## Real Life Application

Make your macros count! Eat high quality, nutrient-dense foods. You want to get the most micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) from your macronutrients; focusing on whole-grain carbohydrates and foods rich in calcium (like dairy products and leafy greens) and iron (like meat, seafood and enriched grains).

**PLAN AHEAD!** If you experience cravings; identify them and prepare. Is it something sweet? Salty? Crunchy? Plan for foods that fit both your cravings and macro budget.

**STAY HYDRATED!** Proper hydration is key for optimal health and can help to reduce headaches and constipation due to PMS. Aim for about half of your body weight in ounces as a start. A quick check for this is if your urine is light yellow or clear. Do not let an increase in scale weight deter you from proper hydration.

**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!** Keep honestly tracking your weight to help identify trends. You may notice a 3-5lb weight gain the week before menstruation. Also record and tell your coach about how you feel, energy levels, cravings – this is beneficial information for both of you to assess trends you can refer back to each month.

## Main Takeaway

While we can't stop your menstrual cycle or the changes in hormones that affect how you are feeling, we can stay aware of and reduce the effect these feelings have on your nutrition plan during PMS. Focus on making your macros count with nutrient-dense foods, proper hydration, and planning the right food choices for you. Also, don't forget that your weight may increase at this time but will come right back down, especially if you stick to your eating plan!

## Resources

Further information on the importance of tracking your food can be found in the Stronger U Getting Started Guide as well as on the [Stronger U blog](#). Additional resources on PMS and the menstrual cycle are available through the [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#).

