

WOMEN, HORMONES AND NEURODIVERGENCE · 11.5

PMDD and ADHD in Adult Women: A Practical Guide

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder is the severe end of premenstrual symptom worsening. It is a recognised DSM-5-TR diagnosis with evidence-based treatments, and it is substantially over-represented in women with ADHD.

FOR

Women with ADHD wondering if their late-luteal week is PMDD

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

18 May 2026

PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

PMDD and ADHD in Adult Women: A Practical Guide

Recognising PMDD

- **PMDD is a specific diagnosis, not ordinary cycle variation.** DSM-5-TR criteria require five or more specific symptoms in the week before menstruation, confirmed by prospective daily tracking across at least two cycles. It eases at the start of menstruation and is absent in the follicular phase.
- **The overlap with ADHD is large and biologically plausible.** Both involve dopamine and serotonin systems sensitive to hormonal modulation. The late-luteal oestrogen drop hits a more vulnerable substrate in women who already have ADHD.
- **The clinical alarm bell is cyclical suicidal ideation.** Suicidal thinking that consistently appears in the late luteal phase and remits at menstruation is one of the most specific markers of PMDD. It is treatable and should not be normalised.

Diagnosis and treatment

- **Track two cycles using the DRSP.** The Daily Record of Severity of Problems is the standard symptom-tracking tool and is free online via the International Association for Premenstrual Disorders. Two cycles minimum; the diagnosis cannot be made retrospectively.
- **GP first, with the tracking data.** Bring the completed records. "I have tracked two cycles and the pattern fits PMDD" lands more clearly than a general description. The RCOG Green-top guideline is the UK clinical reference.
- **SSRIs are the first-line treatment.** Sertraline, fluoxetine, citalopram and escitalopram all have evidence. Luteal-phase-only dosing (days 14 to 28) is supported by RCT evidence and is often the preferred starting approach.
- **Drospirenone-containing combined oral contraceptives have evidence.** Yasmin and equivalents suppress the cycle and reduce the hormonal swing. The interaction with ADHD picture is individual; some women find it helpful, others find the opposite.
- **Specialist options for severe non-responders.** GnRH analogues with add-back HRT are a specialist gynaecology treatment for severe PMDD that has not responded to first-line options. Not a first-line conversation.

How we can help

- **GP route first; gynaecology referral where indicated.** PMDD diagnosis and treatment sit primarily in primary care and gynaecology. The route is well-established. Specialist PMDD clinics exist in some areas.
- **NeuroFX is not a PMDD service.** We are an ADHD and autism clinic. Our prescribing clinicians can think about ADHD medication alongside any PMDD treatment your GP or gynaecologist initiates, particularly where stimulant interaction with SSRIs needs careful consideration.
- **Lifestyle change supplements but does not substitute.** Regular exercise, stable sleep, reduced caffeine and alcohol in the luteal phase help around the edges. They do not produce meaningful change in moderate to severe PMDD on their own.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP if you have tracked two cycles and the pattern fits PMDD. The DRSP record and a clear "I think this might be PMDD" framing usually gets the conversation started. For cyclical suicidal ideation in the late luteal phase, do not wait for the next cycle to track; this warrants an urgent GP appointment or a mental-health crisis route (NHS 111 mental health option, Samaritans 116 123, 999 / A&E for immediate risk). NeuroFX is an ADHD and autism service and does not provide PMDD-specific treatment, but our prescribing clinicians can think about ADHD medication alongside any PMDD treatment your GP or gynaecologist initiates.

SOURCES

Eisenlohr-Moul 2019; Dorani 2021 J Psychiatr Res; RCOG Green-top 48; NICE CKS PMS; Young 2020 BMC Psychiatry; IAPMD

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

neurofx.co.uk · **info@neurofx.co.uk** · **0333 533 3303**