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Do You Have PERIOD BRAIN?

Aunt Flo can interrupt *your* flow, causing you to feel scattered, unfocused, and edgy. The feel-better cure: eating! **by LUCY SAXTON**



Period problems aren't just physical. The drop in estrogen and progesterone that you experience at *that* time of the month can also trigger emotional side effects that are as real as cramps—and can be just as annoying, says Alyssa Dweck, M.D., an ob-gyn in Westchester, NY. Since you can't plan your schoolwork, sports schedule, or a run-in with your crush around your cycle (but wouldn't that be nice?), use this expert advice to beat your period's mind games.

1 / You Feel: CLUMSY

When your body is running on fewer hormones, it starts to retain fluids—even in your brain, according to Mary Jane Minkin, M.D., a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Yale School of Medicine. The changes can throw your body off balance, which leads to a lack of coordination and slower reaction times.

FOOD FIX: lean protein

Since carbs can increase fluid retention, eating more protein can balance it out. Some good options are beans, chicken, and salmon.

2 / You Feel: EXHAUSTED

Fatigue is one of the more common period symptoms, Dr. Dweck says. "Hormonal fluctuations can interrupt sleep patterns, and blood loss can lead to anemia." The result? You feel like taking a snooze in the middle of math class.

FOOD FIX: lean proteins and fruits

If you're feeling less than alert, keep your blood sugar on point by eating a combination of fiber and lean protein. Consider snacks such as almond butter on a pear or hummus with crackers. It's also a good idea to opt for foods that are high in melatonin, a hormone that helps you sleep. Try bananas, oats, and tomatoes.

3 / You Feel: FORGETFUL

You studied hard, but suddenly you're blanking. It's pretty common! Blame it on your estrogen bottoming out, plus another potential problem: lack of iron due to blood loss, which also can leave you foggy. (Speaking of iron, if your period is heavy, you may be at risk of missing the key nutrient. Talk to your doc.)

FOOD FIX: breakfast and healthy fats

Start the day strong with iron-rich items, like oatmeal or eggs. Also try adding avocado to your meals—the healthy fats help support info-carrying nerves in the brain, which help you stay focused.

4 / You Feel: TONGUE-TIED

Stumbling over your words when you *know* what you want to say sucks. This usually happens at the end of your cycle when progesterone is starting to rise. This hormone can actually interfere with your verbal ability and even act as a sedative, making it difficult to think quickly and speak clearly.

FOOD FIX: coconut

It's the perfect mind food. The fatty acids in its oil help improve brain function. Mix it into smoothies and yogurt, and you'll be back to your chatty self in no time.

5 / You Feel: EMOTIONAL

During your period, you may sense you're on the verge of tears. All. The. Time. What gives? Along with estrogen and progesterone, your happy hormones are taking a dive too. And when your body lacks them—serotonin in particular—you naturally feel down and can become easily upset.

FOOD FIX: complex carbohydrates

To alleviate your blahs, you need to fill up on foods that boost serotonin. Carb-packed options, like rice, quinoa, potatoes, beans, and lentils, can all do the trick.

6 / You Feel: EXTRA

Can't figure out why you're angry AF? Your wild, uncontrollable mood swings can also be rooted in your MIA hormones. It can be frustrating to feel so all over the place, but 85 percent of girls experience this, so know that you're not alone.

FOOD FIX: meals rich in magnesium

Well, you can't do much to spike your estrogen levels, but you *can* combat some of those out-of-control vibes by lowering the cortisol (a stress hormone) in your body. Foods high in magnesium have been linked to calming effects, so sip on a green juice, eat a leafy green salad, or have some dark chocolate—and give yourself some time to relax.