



IBS and Menstruation

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The Relationship Between IBS and Menstruation

As if IBS wasn't difficult enough to deal with, IBS can make menstruation worse. And in addition to worse period-related trouble, IBS symptoms are known to get worse before and during menstruation as well – it's a double-edged sword.

By learning more about this link, you can better understand the difficulty faced by women who suffer from IBS.

How Do Hormones Affect Your Digestive System?

When you go through menstruation, there are two different hormones that are released in the body. The hormones are called estrogen and progesterone. Not many people realize that hormones have a direct effect on the digestive system, but are thought more so to affect the mood and cause cramps due to the shedding of the lining in the uterus.

However, the impact it has on the digestive system goes far beyond that. These hormones have a direct impact on the gastrointestinal tract because there's actually receptors within the tract made solely for the hormones. The impact the hormones have on the tract is the main reason why a lot of women, even those who do not have IBS, experience problems with their digestive system during their menstrual cycle, yet the impact is much more severe on those with IBS.

What Occurs During the Cycle?

Both bloating and constipation are common during the start of the menstrual cycle, in both women with and without IBS. Many women find this occurs right after ovulation, and the symptoms of menstruation they experience change once the cycle begins. Once menstruation occurs, the most common symptoms are diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal pain while the lining sheds. These symptoms range from mild to severe and can be very uncomfortable when they occur. These are the regular symptoms experienced by those without IBS, but when you throw IBS into the mix, things get more difficult.

As mentioned, most women with IBS have their symptoms increase while going through menstruation. While uncommon, a small number of people actually have their IBS symptoms improve during menstruation, but the numbers are small. Women who have IBS are more likely to suffer from conditions linked to menstruation, such as dysmenorrhea, which is severe cramping, much worse than the standard period-related cramps. While IBS doesn't have an impact on the mood-related symptoms that occur with PMS, backache, concentration, fatigue, sleeping problems, and water retention all increase in intensity when IBS overlaps with PMS.

There have been studies done on the hormone levels present in women during their menstrual cycle, with and without IBS. While it's known that hormone levels are linked to symptoms related to GI, there's no difference in levels between IBS and non-IBS women.

Conclusion

While there's no link between the effect of hormones on the body and IBS, there is a clear link that can make dealing with this issue difficult on some women. Your doctor can offer you pain management ideas and additional techniques to make management easier on you.