

EXERCISING OPTIONS



MYRNA PARTRICH

Workout hard to fight anxiety, depression of PMS

Question:

Can you define premenstrual syndrome (PMS)? I've had problems with it over during last few years. I am 31 years of age and exercise regularly. Does exercise help PMS or should I refrain from such activity during these times?

Answer:

The most intense symptoms of PMS occur two weeks before a woman begins her menstrual bleeding. This 14-day period occurs after ovulation and rarely varies in length.

PMS symptoms are absent during the two weeks after the start of menstruation, but they recur at least three months in a row. If you commonly experience PMS, you will have two weeks on and two weeks off.

Nearly 90 percent of women experience PMS at some time. About 40 percent claim it disturbs their lives. Yet, there is no definition, no cause and no cure for PMS.

We don't know whether the syndrome is psychological or hormonal, normal or abnormal.

While there is no cure, we do know that diet and exercise can control, if not eliminate, the symptoms.

However, furious battles have arisen between the American Psychiatric Association and feminist organizations. Many psychiatrists say PMS should be categorized as a psychiatric disease. Feminists charge that PMS is widespread, and therefore, must have a physical cause.

For those lucky women who do not suffer from PMS, let me briefly list some of the symptoms. Men may also recognize them in women they know.

Common symptoms include: migraine headaches, depression, crying spells, backache, a feeling of losing control, anxiety, weight gain, cravings for salted and sweet foods, the appearance of acne, body bloating and breast soreness.

You can ward off some of these symptoms by avoiding foods that contribute to water retention and bloating. Try a good, low-fat, healthy diet. Avoid or reduce caffeine, salt, animal protein, alcohol and sugar.

Also, increase your intake of carbohydrates, especially fruit and leafy vegetables. But don't go hungry. Try eating several small meals, rather than one or two large ones.

Vitamin B6 also might help calm the PMS jitters. I have read that the supplement helps.

Now, my expertise — exercise — and how it can alleviate PMS symptoms.

I know that because aerobic exercise stimulates the production of beta-endorphins, it reduces the anxiety and depression that many PMS sufferers experience.

Exercise at least three times each week. Five to six exercise sessions is ideal. And make sure to push yourself a little bit more when you are experiencing PMS.

Many doctors highly recommend using an exercise program — whether it's speed walking, swimming or aerobics — to treat the symptoms of PMS.

In my opinion, labeling the condition as a psychiatric illness is dangerous and sexist. There have been no studies to prove that.

So what is a woman to do? My advice is to recognize PMS for what it is. And certainly don't think of yourself as abnormal for experiencing it.

(Myrna Partrich is co-owner of The Workout Co. in Bloomfield Hills. She is an appointee to the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and the Michigan Fitness Foundation. Send questions or comments for Myrna to: Myrna Partrich, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, Mich. 48009.)

Dentist offers free mouth guard for sports

BY DIANE BALDWIN
SPECIAL WRITER

By the time children reach age seven, they have permanent adult teeth.

Therefore, it is nothing less than tragic when a child is treated in the emergency room for an injury that could have been prevented if a protective, professional-quality mouth guard had been used during sports activity, said Dr. William S. Pourcho, D.D.S.

Pourcho makes custom-molded mouth guards for children and adults. And he does so free of charge without hidden costs.

How can he afford to do it?
"It hardly costs me anything," Pourcho said. "If everyone gave something, it would be a better community. If it saves a tooth, it's worth it."

Besides, the process is simple. Call the office and tell the receptionist that you wish to come in and obtain a free mouth guard. The molding is a quick, painless process. Three days later, you can return to pick up your mouth guard.

Who can take advantage of this program? "Anyone with teeth," said Pourcho.

Any dentist can make a similar mouth guard, but may charge between \$45 and \$200, he added.

A graduate of the University of Michigan, Pourcho offers blue and gold mouth guards to University of Michigan fans. "Exactly like the one Charles Woodson wears," he said. But clear ones are available, too, he said.

Kids who participate in sports like football, basketball, hockey, baseball, karate, in-line skating and wrestling need mouth guards, Pourcho said.

"You'd be surprised at how many injuries result from baseball," he said.

Many people fail to categorize in-line skating as a sport that requires a mouth guard, but, Pourcho noted, "you go to all the trouble to wear protective clothing and pads, why not protect your teeth?"

Although kids with braces have better resilience during trauma — braces splint teeth together — they still should be fitted for a mouth guard. According to Pourcho, the device also helps prevent gums from being torn up in a sporting accident.

Without a mouth guard, kids can chip a tooth, knock out a tooth or kill a nerve.



STAFF PHOTO BY JERRY ZOLTOWSKI

Preventing Injury: Dr. William Pourcho (above), D.D.S., a Bloomfield Hills-based dentist, said he offers free mouth guards to anyone who is interested because he hates to see unnecessary injuries to the gums and teeth because of a failure to wear the protective device. A fan of the University of Michigan, Pourcho offers blue and gold protective mouth guards — in addition to clear — to any patient who shares his love of the Wolverines.

Dead nerves cause teeth to turn black.

Many kids use pre-formed mouth guards purchased at sporting goods stores.

But Pourcho recommends custom-made ones because "they fit only one mouth exactly — yours," he said.

Unlike the store-bought version, a custom-formed, rubber one can be adjusted around the lips and gums, guaranteeing a better, more secure fit, he said.

If your child is between the ages of 10

and 14, Pourcho recommended that a new mouth guard be fitted every year since "teeth can change quite rapidly" during this stage of adolescence, he said.

If your child has an accident that may affect permanent teeth, Pourcho offered the following advice:

If the mouth guard is still in the mouth, leave it until reaching your dentist's office or emergency room.

If the mouth guard is forced out of the mouth and a tooth is loose or knocked out, hold the tooth in place

until you get to the dentist or emergency room.

Pourcho also recommends rinsing unattached teeth with milk before replacing, if at all possible.

Holding a tooth in place to help the tooth implant into the gums' ligament structure as long as it is replaced within 30 to 60 minutes of the trauma, said Pourcho.

Dental trauma can frighten a child, not to mention permanently alter his or her mouth, so why not take advantage of this free program, he said.

Today's stretch regime can ease future activity

The calendar has flipped to 1998 and, as much as we hate to admit it, that means we are going to turn another year older this year. No, we can't avoid it, but, oh, how we wish we could.

But we also can become younger. So, for starters, let's learn about the importance of flexibility for all ages.

Many young people believe they will be strong and agile forever. But those of us with more experience know that this is not true.

In fact, our bodies need a lot of attention and work in order to stay fit as the years pass. An important part of staying in shape is maintaining your flexibility.

Improving flexibility can increase overall suppleness. It relaxes tight muscles, improves balance, prevents stiffness and decreases the risk of injury.

Especially as we get older, the ability to perform daily tasks with ease and minimal restriction — becomes more and more important. Most people take such tasks for granted. But this is what flexibility allows, and that's why it is vital to keep those muscles working and stretched.

The elasticity of your muscles and the tautness of the connective tissue supporting your joints determine flexibility levels.

Unfortunately, flexibility naturally diminishes with age. By age 70, you could lose up to a third of your flexibility — that's pretty incredible when you think about it.

Another thing to look forward to is a thickening of the connective tissue in the joints thickens, which restricts joint mobility. In turn, our muscles work less, weaken and become significantly less flexible. It's a vicious cycle that can only be prevented with regular exercise. Exercise also keeps joints healthy.

But it's very important to balance flexibility with strength. The two go hand in hand. It is easy to injure yourself by overstretching, which can make your joints unstable, or by exercising beyond your personal fitness level.

Flexibility and strength loss, however, do not have to accompany aging, if we take care of ourselves. If we keep our bodies moving and gently stretch our muscles on a regular basis, we can maintain our flexibility.

I enjoy a vigorous daily walk but always begin with warm-up and stretching exercises. Also, many people assume that stretching should precede exercise. Actually that is false and failure to stretch can result in injury.

Warm up your muscles for five to 10 minutes before stretching and then move into your exercise regime.

A slow march in place or short walk can increase your body temperature and lubricate your joints, making your muscles more pliable. Then isolate different joints by moving them individually. Moving the limbs repeatedly will prepare the joints.

Even if your mobility is restricted, you can do these warm-ups by performing them in a seated position. In cooler weather, your muscles may be stiffer so wear warm clothing and stretch for longer period of time.

Remember, our bodies have an uncanny ability to regulate themselves to prevent injury. Our muscles tell us when we stretch too far by becoming tight and stiff. Do not push these limits. Instead, wait until you feel muscle tension diminish. Stretches should be done with ease, so coax rather than force muscles into lengthening. Stop immediately, if you feel any pain.

Here are a couple of tips for stretching more efficiently. Don't forget to breathe. Exhale as you elongate a muscle, and take several deep breaths throughout a stretch. Remember that your muscles need oxygen. Also, never bounce during a stretch.

We all want to feel healthy and stay strong as we get older, so don't let another calendar year slip by without working at flexibility. Please keep your bodies moving and take care of those muscles — they're worth their weight in gold!

I read every one of your letters and I love your comment. Please keep writing me with any questions, inspirational stories or suggestions for upcoming articles to: "Talk to the Mirror," Weight Watchers Corporate Communications, P.O. Box 9072, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48334-2974 or fax: (248) 653-7106.

HEALTHY LIVING

STATISTICS CATEGORIZE THOSE SEEKING 1998 WEIGHT LOSS

Many Americans have targeted those extra pounds with one of their New Year's resolutions and decided to get into shape

through diet and exercise. In fact, lifestyle and demographics statistics compiled by Folk Co., a global information firm, show that those fighting the "battle of the bulge" in 1998 will most often be married (69.8 percent), own a home (66.6 percent), have at least one child (34.3 percent), earn less than \$20,000 per year (23.1 percent) and fall between the ages of 36 and 44 (22.9 percent).

The top 10 locations where these people can be found spans the country from coast to coast, according to the figures.

But, interestingly, Louisiana is the state most often represented in the statistics. Alpena, Mich. ranked second.

Polk's statistics also indicated that American households interested in physical fitness and exercise most often fall into two age groups: 25-34 (24.6 percent) and 35-44 (24.6 percent).

They are married (55.3 percent), have at least one child (32.8 percent), own homes (62 percent) and make \$50,000-74,000 annually.

The top 10 locations for these people are also widespread with Californians well-represented. Four cities in the state ranked in the top 10.

Polk provides multi-dimensional intelligence information solutions to companies as a direct marketing resource, in addition to demographic and lifestyle data, database marketing services, statistics for the motor vehicle industry and geographic information systems.

Polk provides multi-dimensional intelligence information solutions to companies as a direct marketing resource, in addition to demographic and lifestyle data, database marketing services, statistics for the motor vehicle industry and geographic information systems.

Polk provides multi-dimensional intelligence information solutions to companies as a direct marketing resource, in addition to demographic and lifestyle data, database marketing services, statistics for the motor vehicle industry and geographic information systems.

Polk provides multi-dimensional intelligence information solutions to companies as a direct marketing resource, in addition to demographic and lifestyle data, database marketing services, statistics for the motor vehicle industry and geographic information systems.

Polk provides multi-dimensional intelligence information solutions to companies as a direct marketing resource, in addition to demographic and lifestyle data, database marketing services, statistics for the motor vehicle industry and geographic information systems.

Polk provides multi-dimensional intelligence information solutions to companies as a direct marketing resource, in addition to demographic and lifestyle data, database marketing services, statistics for the motor vehicle industry and geographic information systems.

Polk provides multi-dimensional intelligence information solutions to companies as a direct marketing resource, in addition to demographic and lifestyle data, database marketing services, statistics for the motor vehicle industry and geographic information systems.

gerous condition caused by a steep drop in body temperature, said Dexter W. Shurney, M.D., corporate medical director for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.

The condition occurs when body temperature drops to 95," said Dr. Shurney. "Seniors are especially susceptible because their bodies are less able to resist and react to cold temperatures.

Many medications that seniors take may also interfere with the body's ability to feel cold."

There are a variety of symptoms of hypothermia someone may experience when exposed to the cold for an extended period of time, outdoors or indoors.

Hands, feet and abdomen may be cold.

A limb or one side of the body may tremble. Someone suffering from hypothermia may also become drowsy or confused, appearing intoxicated.

Also, there may be a drop in the victim's blood pressure. Heart rate may slow or become irregular.

Another symptom is shallow and slow breathing.

If someone has any of these symptoms and a body temperature below 95 degrees, immediate medical attention is needed.

A temperature too far below the normal 98.6 degrees may be fatal, especially for an older person.

After calling for help, protect the victim from the cold and cover them with a blanket. A hot water bottle filled with warm water may also be used to warm them.

However, extreme heat sources will raise body temperature too quickly, causing the individual to go into shock. Aggressive measures to warm the person should only be performed by medical experts.

Make sure, too, that elderly loved ones maintain adequate heat in their homes and keep plenty of blankets on their beds during these cold winter months.

WINTER PUTS SENIORS AT RISK OF DEVELOPING HYPOTHERMIA

Now that winter is here, seniors need to be protected from the frigid weather to avoid risk of hypothermia, a potentially dan-