Tip 1: Get Active

Working out and being active can lessen period cramps and get your body in a much better mood. Before starting your cycle, due to PMS (Premenstrual syndrome), your body may feel more sluggish, you will have more craving for particularly fatty (aka comfort foods), and your emotions will be on a rollercoaster. This is due to the decreased production of hormones that occur during the second half of your menstrual cycle. Progesterone and estrogen levels lower and serotonin levels are also decreased. Serotonin is the mood stabilizer. When these important hormones are out of whack, it can lead to some bad decisions that can put a damper on your health and body goals. Working out makes your body secrete this beautiful chemical called endorphins that makes pain more tolerable and can make you feel like you are walking on sunshine. You do not have to do a two-hour session in the gym or run for an hour because you do not want to push your body too much during this time. Any amount of sustainable physical activity can do the trick! As a disclaimer and important reminder, symptoms do differ from person to person.
Tip 2: Foods to avoid and food to enjoy

During our periods and during PMS, cravings for foods that we normally would limit our intake of are through the roof. The intake of certain food, though they may taste so good and momentarily feel good, they can also lead to bloating, hormonal acne, added fatigue, and weight gain. Many times, these foods have no nutritional value, so on top of us having adverse side effects, we are left feeling unfulfilled and wanting to consume more and more of these unhealthy foods. This does not mean do not treat yourself because you deserve that chocolate! Remember to enjoy in moderation. Eating certain food can also worsen that pain of cramps because these foods induce inflammation which is one of that factors that make cramps so painful.

Foods to limit are salty foods, fatty meats and saturated fats because they can lead to to bloating and breakouts. Processed grains and dairy can lead to inflammation. Sugar can also cause inflammation, and coffee can cause blood vessels that feed the uterus to tighten and create discomfort. Do not lose all hope because there are tasty alternatives! For a sweet tooth, try dark chocolate, oranges, or bananas. Salmon is a great protein option, and matcha green tea with coconut milk and honey as a lower-level caffeine option. Dairy-free, calcium-rich foods like almonds and broccoli are always a good idea.

JOY BELLE DOUGLAS, SENIOR PEER HEALTH EDUCATOR
Tip 3: Increase water intake

Increasing water can counteract bloating. A lot of people do not realize that your body is retaining water because it does not have enough coming in it. It will hold on to all the water it can because it does not want your body to dehydrate -- even more so during your period. The body is trying to store and save all the resources possible. Water is also a natural detoxifier and cleanser so it can help flush out any toxins in your body. If an episode of PMS eating took place, then water will help with getting the junk out of your body quicker! Make sure to keep a water bottle on deck at all times. They’re are some affordable and cute options on Amazon which is your best during the quarantine. Do you have a water bottle you love? Share the brand with us!

Tip 4: Listen to your body

While experiencing PMS and periods, menstruators can feel a little less motivated, a lot more tired, and sometimes out of control of their bodies. This is 100% natural, and there are ways to give yourself back agency and make sure you are taking good care of yourself. Your body is doing a lot of work preparing for your period because it is the same process that it takes to make a baby - minus the sperm. This causes a lot of changes and can make you feel extremely fatigued physically or emotionally. When experiencing your symptoms, which will vary from body to body, you have to make sure to engage with them and do things that can counteract them. When you are tired you need to rest, take a nap and give yourself a break. When you are hungry nourish your body with foods that are fulfilling and nutritious as mentioned above. (continued on page 4).

JOY BELLE DOUGLAS, SENIOR PEER HEALTH EDUCATOR
Tip 4: continued
Do not deprive yourself or feel down because your body is experiencing a natural process. Do note that if you are feeling any sort of extremes in terms of pains, emotions, or fatigue contact your doctor. Extreme symptoms can be a sign of menstrual disorders or diseases like endometriosis or PCOS (Polycystic ovary syndrome). Other adverse health issues like anemia are common in bodies of menstruators. A primary care provider can help come up with a treatment plan that’s right for your body.

Tip 5: Track your period
Getting period tracker apps is an absolute essential for me, and it is so much easier to keep up with your menstrual cycle and to get more insight on your body. It is something that I cannot live without and have had for the last 6 years. Now, I don’t have to download an app because it is synced up with my health app on my iPhone. You can also keep track of PMS and menstruation via bullet journaling. These methods are very beneficial because they do not only track your period but you can also track your habits. Some of the features I like are knowing the first signs of PMS, how moods differ throughout the month, and different affects that can happen to your body as a result of your oncoming period, like breast tenderness. This insight can offer relief when you are confused about why your energy is lower than usual, and you can start taking charge of your period self-care. This can also help if you have irregular periods so that when you start experiencing certain symptoms there is a way previously tracked information and you can be a little more prepared.

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Tip 6: Look into your period products to make sure they are right for your body

Period products are essentials for every menstruating body, but not all options are for all body types. Finding period products that are best for your body in terms of size, shape, comfort and fit are all very important to making sure that you feel secure during your cycle. Using products that are not best for your body can lead to leaks, vaginal discomfort, skin irritation and possible infections. Scented products are marketed as a way to help with smell but the chemicals that are used to create the scent on the sanitary products can have adverse effects on your body. A lot of popular period brands use chemicals in their marketed sanitary products that can enhance cramps because the formulation is not curated for the bodies of menstruators. Choosing 100% cotton alternatives that are free of chemicals and dyes will keep your body from absorbing toxins that are harmful through the insertion of tampons or the use of pads. Looking into menstrual cups or disks as another alternative can help save money on repetitive repurchase of period products and saving on waste which will have a positive impact on our environment. Other alternatives consist of leakproof underwear and reusable pads. There are many more amazing alternatives that are healthy and can have a positive impact on your body!

Click here for more info about menstrual disorders

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