

HT City

Coping with PMS
It gets difficult at times but you learn to deal with it...

There is a joke going around that Americans did not vote Hillary Clinton into the White House because they are worried that she might just declare war on the world under aggravated mood swings during "that time of the month".

According to a report in the *Guardian* one woman was told by a general practitioner to put a red flag on her desk when she had PMS, so no one would come near her.

Anjali Sudan* was dumped by her boyfriend last month because "she went mad every month".

Commonly known as PMS, premenstrual syndrome, is that time of the month when women undergo and experience physical and psychological trauma just before the beginning of the menstrual cycle. Acne, mood swings, and irritability are some of the most common manifestations of PMS, accompanied by bloating, back aches, headaches, stress, fatigue, listlessness and tears ready on trigger.

In the United Kingdom, recent reports show that doctors commonly prescribe anti-depressants to women during this period. In the UK the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RCOG) also has set guidelines on how to treat PMS. In fact UK even has a National Association for Premenstrual Syndrome that organises awareness camps and self help groups for women and families.

However, in India, society does not acknowledge PMS as an actual physical, medical condition. Though women are now seeing medical help in extreme cases, husbands, say doctors, do not understand why.

Dr Shivani Sachdev, a gynecologist with Phoenix Hospitals says that she gets about one patient a week with a PMS problem and, that too, only cases where things are so bad that family life is disrupted. "Husbands come and sit quietly. They just want doctors to prescribe something and get it over with. They do not acknowledge it as a real condition, not even the new generation of husbands in their 20s."

According to Dr Kamra Shaila, five to 10 per cent of women are in need of serious medical attention for PMS. "Two to five per cent of my patients come in with PMS, a

number that has gone up by three times in the past couple of years." Social awareness continues to be a problem. "My boss hates it if I call in and say PMS. Her attitude is that every woman goes through it and still works, so I must be faking it," says Mahima Singh, who was in bed for two days last month due to severe stomach ache during PMS.

But Dr Megha Hazuria, a psy-

chologist who often sees patients who are worried about their behavioural reactions during PMS, says, "It's still not taken as seriously as it needs to be, but it is changing. As women become more aware about PMS they are becoming assertive and ensuring that people around them understand what they go through."

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