

# Feeling fat and ugly: Perceptions of the premenstrual body

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**Feeling Fat**

For women with a history of bulimic behaviors, the experience of feeling fat is often associated with negative body image and low self-esteem. This is particularly true for women who are premenstrual, as they may experience weight gain and bloating, which can exacerbate these feelings.

**Feeling Ugly**

Women who experience premenstrual changes in their appearance, such as skin breakouts or hair loss, may feel less attractive and more self-conscious. This can lead to a negative body image and a feeling of being ugly.

**A Critical Gaze**

Women who are perceived as being overweight or unattractive may experience a critical gaze from others, which can lead to feelings of shame and embarrassment. This is particularly true for women who are premenstrual, as they may be more likely to be perceived as being overweight or unattractive.

**Body out of Control**

Women who experience premenstrual changes in their body, such as weight gain or bloating, may feel that their body is out of control. This can lead to a negative body image and a feeling of being out of control.

**Psychological Intervention**

Psychological interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, can help women to manage their feelings of being fat and ugly. These interventions can help women to challenge negative thoughts and feelings, and to develop a more positive body image.

**Reduction in body dissatisfaction**

Pre-menstruation	Post-menstruation
Body dissatisfaction	Body dissatisfaction
Weight	Weight
Body image	Body image
Body image	Body image

**Experiences of the Premenstrual Body**

Women who experience premenstrual changes in their body, such as weight gain or bloating, may feel that their body is out of control. This can lead to a negative body image and a feeling of being out of control.

**Impact of the Menstruation**

Menstruation can have a significant impact on a woman's body image and self-esteem. This is particularly true for women who experience premenstrual changes in their body, such as weight gain or bloating.

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**Body Dissatisfaction and PMS**  
Body dissatisfaction is associated with PMS symptoms and is a risk factor for PMS.  
Researcher: [Kendrick, K. & Ussher, J. \(2017\)](#)  
Link: [https://doi.org/10.1080/14440082.2017.1381111](#)

**Experiences of the Premenstrual Body**  
Experiences with self-perceptions of the body are related to PMS symptoms.  
Researcher: [Ussher, J. & Perz, J. \(2017\)](#)  
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**Feeling Fat**  
I feel that my body is not what I want it to be.  
I feel that my body is not what I want it to be.  
I feel that my body is not what I want it to be.

**Feeling Ugly**  
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**Reduction in body dissatisfaction Pre-Post intervention**

Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
Group	Pre-Post
Pre-Post	Pre-Post
Pre-Post	Pre-Post
Pre-Post	Pre-Post

**Psychological Intervention**  
The results of the intervention were significant.  
The results of the intervention were significant.  
The results of the intervention were significant.

## Body Dissatisfaction and PMS

**Body Dissatisfaction Higher in Premenstrual Phase of Cycle** (Kaczmarek et al 2016; Teixeira et al 2013)

**Women with Higher Premenstrual Distress - Higher Body Dissatisfaction** (Altabe & Thompson, 1990; MJuljat, et al 2007)

**Body Dissatisfaction a significant correlate of PMS severity** (Kleinstäuber et al 2016)



## Body Dissatisfaction: Cause or Consequence of premenstrual distress?



# Experiences of the Premenstrual Body

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60 women with self-diagnosed PMS - study on PMS and relationships - average age 34

809 women screened for moderate-severe PMS - PMS intervention study - average age 29

# Feeling Fat

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I feel ***bloated*** and it makes me feel like ***my body take up more space***. I also feel ***betrayed by my body***

I feel ***disappointed about my body***. I feel ***bloated*** and tired so I never look good in anything I wear

I often ***go up a size*** during that time, especially around the tummy, and feel heavy and slow. ***If I didn't have to look at myself I wouldn't***



# Feeling Ugly



Yes. ***I feel unattractive.*** I know I still look the same – it is all in my mind but that doesn't make me feel any better. ***I feel fat.***

Yes I hate it. ***I feel like an elephant, very unattractive*** and I over compensate by putting pressure on my partner. ***I don't like looking in the mirror***

I always feel ***fat and yuck.*** I think because I'm bloated I just feel ***fat and ugly.*** ***I don't like my body*** when I'm premenstrual

# A Critical Gaze

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I feel like a whale. I feel *unattractive, unwanted*

I think *others are able to see my bloated stomach* and recognise in me that I'm walking around premenstrual. It's like I'm carrying this *extra burden of woman-ness* around and I feel really *exposed* by that

I might wear different clothing, stay away from the beach because I feel swollen. I have a *partner now and he also tends to take my weight personally*, which is bizarre



# Body out of Control

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*I hate my body*, but not from a visual perspective. More of, "**what are you doing to me?** Why are you doing this?"

I'm a really controlled person and I'm very sensitive to any kind of tiny changes that happen to my body so **any tiny bit of out of control-ness really impacts on me**

**I don't have control of like how many hormones are like flying around in my body** or things like that.



# Psychological Intervention



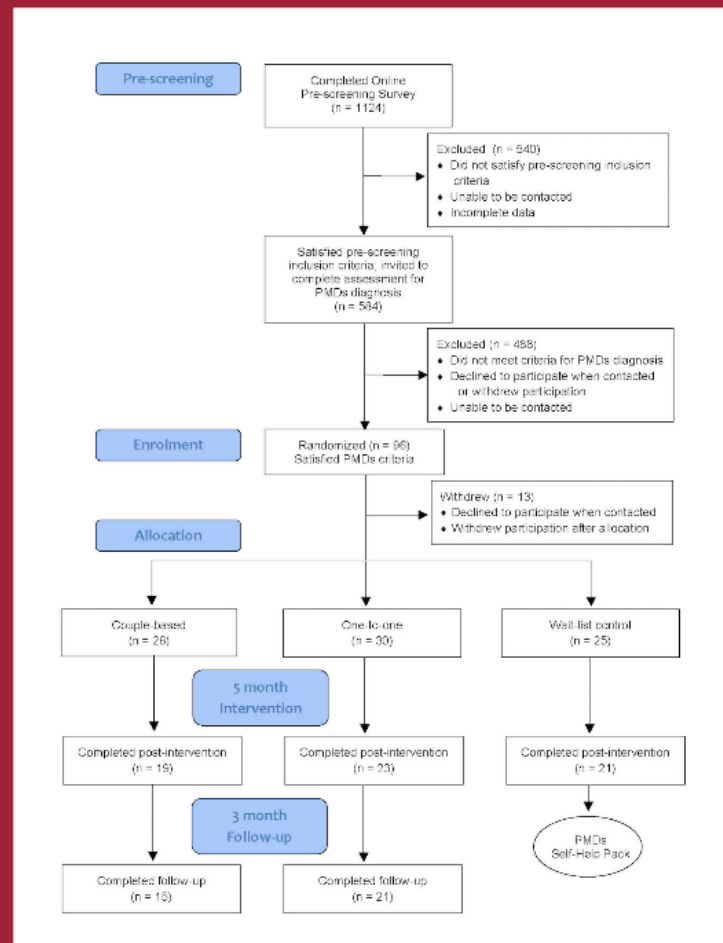
Four 90-minute CBT sessions, over a five-month period:

examine women's attributions for premenstrual distress within a bio-psycho-social framework

challenge negative self-blaming beliefs that may exacerbate symptomatology

behavioural coping skills: relaxation training, taking time out for self-care, diet and exercise

relational context of premenstrual distress - assertiveness training techniques



# Impact of the Intervention

Repeated measures analysis of variance: significant time by group interaction

Women in the two CBT conditions: lower total premenstrual symptoms, emotional reactivity/mood, and premenstrual distress, in comparison to the wait list control.

Significantly higher active behavioural coping post-intervention in the couple condition than in the one-to-one and wait list control groups.

Ussher, JM & Perz, J. (2017) Evaluation of the relative efficacy of a couple cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) for Premenstrual Disorders (PMDs), in comparison to one-to-one CBT and a wait list control: a randomized controlled trial. PLoS ONE 12(4): e0175068. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0175068>

# Reduction in body dissatisfaction

## Pre-Post intervention



### Pre-intervention

Group	%
Wait list control	84
One-to-one	83
Couple	78

### Post-intervention

Group	%
Wait list control	59
One-to-one	34
Couple	15

## Acceptance and understanding of embodied change

### Post intervention

	%
Wait list control	5
One-to-one	68
Couple	72



*I don't feel so badly about being bloated or slightly bigger*  
in that time, in fact I hardly notice it now (one-to-one)

What used to bother me before – bloating and not liking what I saw in the mirror,  
now ***doesn't seem to bother me as much, I do not dwell on it*** as much as I did  
before (couple).

I understand now that I ***need to take it easy*** as my body is  
under stress. ***There is nothing wrong or bad about my body***  
(one-to-one).

# Self-care and coping to deal with embodied change

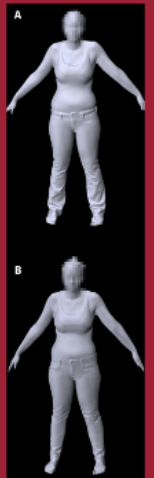
## Post-intervention

WLC	9%
One-to-one	26%
Couple	58%



*I am not as extreme in my self-criticism* – I still experience bloating and feeling not as good looking, but I *get pampering things done, wear more comfortable clothes, accept myself and tell myself it will change shortly* (couple).

I have *changed to a much healthier lifestyle* so now when I look in the mirror I see that progress I've made rather than hating my body. *I am more accepting of monthly changes* and remind myself that it's only for a short time (one-to-one).



# Body Dissatisfaction and PMS

Cultural constructions of Idealised femininity

Gendered norms



Awareness and coping

Premenstrual mood change

Body shame

Male gaze

Menstrual stigma

Self-objectification

Fat shaming





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**Body Dissatisfaction and BMI**

Body dissatisfaction is a common experience for women, particularly during the premenstrual phase. Research indicates that women with higher BMIs are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction.

**Experiences of the Premenstrual Body**

Women with self-reported PMDD also report an increase in body dissatisfaction. Research indicates that women with PMDD experience higher levels of body dissatisfaction.

**Body Dissatisfaction and BMI**

Body dissatisfaction is a common experience for women, particularly during the premenstrual phase. Research indicates that women with higher BMIs are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction.

**Feeling Fat**

This journal entry captures how I feel the day before my hair wash. I feel fat because of my body. This thought about my body. This thought about my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body.

**Feeling Ugly**

On 10/08/2018, I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body.

**A Critical Gaze**

I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body.

**Body out of Control**

I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body. I feel fat because of my body.

**Impact of the Intervention**

Research indicates that the intervention significantly reduced body dissatisfaction. Research indicates that the intervention significantly reduced body dissatisfaction.

Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
Group	N
Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention

**Psychological Intervention**

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