



OH NO!
THAT TIME OF MONTH!

stressed out?

study finds stressed out women report more severe pms symptoms

Women who report feeling stressed early in their monthly cycle were more likely than those who were less stressed to report more pronounced symptoms before and during menstruation, according to a study by researchers at the National Institutes of Health and other institutions.

The association raises the possibility that feeling stressed in the weeks before menstruation could worsen the symptoms typically associated with premenstrual syndrome and menstruation.

Women who reported feeling stressed two weeks before the beginning of menstruation were two to four times more likely to report moderate to severe symptoms than were women who did not feel stressed.

Premenstrual syndrome is a group of physical and psychological symptoms occurring around the time of ovulation. Symptoms include feelings of anger, anxiety, mood swings, depression, fatigue, decreased concentration, breast swelling and tenderness, general aches, and abdominal bloating.

The study was conducted by researchers in the NIH's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the University of Mas-

sachusetts-Amherst, and the State University of New York, Buffalo.

"It may be possible to lessen or prevent the severity of these symptoms with techniques that help women to cope more effectively with stress, such as biofeedback, exercise, or relaxation techniques," said Audra Gollenberg, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in NICHD's Division of Epidemiology, Statistics and Prevention Research.

A number of medications are used to treat the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome, said study author Mary Hediger, Ph.D, also of the Division of Epidemiology, Statistics and Prevention research. These include diuretics, pain killers, oral contraceptive pills, drugs that suppress ovarian function, and antidepressants.

"Each woman is an individual, and some women may experience severe symptoms that require medications," Dr. Hediger said. "However, future studies may show that stress reduction techniques can prevent or reduce the severity of premenstrual syndrome, which might provide a cost effective alternative to medications for some women."