

# TATTLER<sup>®</sup>

A woman with long dark hair, wearing dark sunglasses and a shimmering, sequined sleeveless dress, is seated in a white medical chair. She is holding a handheld medical device in her right hand, which is illuminated by a large, circular surgical light. Her left hand is raised to her face, with her index finger pointing towards her cheek. She is wearing a large diamond ring on her left ring finger and a matching bracelet. The background shows a clinical setting with medical equipment, including a monitor displaying a hand and a tray with various medical supplies like gloves and a container labeled 'Cello-Pat'.

BEAUTY & COSMETIC  
SURGERY GUIDE 2025

# SWINGS

## *and turnabouts*

*Fluctuating moods, physical pain, emotional turmoil... Hormonal imbalance can be debilitating at any age. One writer tells how she learnt to cultivate a happier equilibrium*

By HARRIET KEAN

**HAVE YOU EVER FELT** seething rage for no apparent reason? Have you ever been so frazzled that you can't think straight? Or broken down in floods of tears when subjected to mild criticism? I have. And so have the 30 to 40 per cent of women in the UK with Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), defined by the NHS as 'a collection of physical and emotional symptoms that can occur in the two weeks before a period'. Though their causes are not fully understood, these can range from mood swings to anxiety, and bloating and cramping to breast tenderness: in other words, a concoction of bliss.

PMS had been a part of my life since my teenage years but, in my late twenties, it started to become an issue. Ten days before menstruating, during the fortnight known as the luteal phase, I turned into a different person, prone to persistent anxiety, irritability and profound lows. I started to dread these days, and how I might think, or react, or handle difficult situations. For a third of every month, life became much harder. Then I learnt about Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD), a severe form of PMS that can cause suicidal ideation in extreme cases. Recognising some of the symptoms in myself, I resolved to investigate further.

My first port of call was the consulting room of illustrious hormone expert Dr Martin Galy. 'Women

are not supposed to suffer from PMS,' he told me authoritatively. 'You're supposed to feel lovely at that time, so you want to have babies.' Apparently, it's all down to the balance of oestrogen and progesterone during women's cycles: although the two have intertwined functions, in super-simplistic terms, the former is more involved in menstruation and the latter in supporting pregnancy. After drawing a chart to demonstrate the usual levels of each, Galy confided his suspicion that I lacked enough of the latter and was therefore subject to 'oestrogen dominance' (which can also cause weight gain and other PMS symptoms). After a blood test showed my progesterone levels were low-to-normal, he prescribed a course to top them up.

I took the medication for a few days, but was so debilitated by the side effects – dizziness, nausea and panic – that I reckoned I'd rather have PMS. And though the doctor assured me this was to be expected during the body's 'adjustment period', I remained concerned by how violently mine had reacted.

I asked him if I could pursue another path to alleviate the symptoms. He suggested supplements such as vitamin D, evening primrose oil and berberine; and strongly recommended exercise, 'especially HIIT'. And I decided that, from then on, I would take the holistic, natural approach.

It was this philosophy that led me to Kyle Poleon, co-founder of the glamorous Train with ID gym in Mayfair. Poleon believes that 'if your body is stronger, fitter and working better, everything else will fall into place'. The training schedule he set me was going to prove it. And, boy, was it rigorous: a full-body strengthening programme that involved thrice-weekly visits to work out alongside the It girls and handsome financiers. Within a few months, I'd progressed to free weights and such compound movements as deadlifts, squats and assisted chin-ups. (Unlike most regimes there, which focus on aesthetics, mine was about internal building strength.) As for my symptoms: having started around the beginning of my luteal phase, I was seeing an improvement within a mere two weeks.

Next, I sought advice from Jessica Shand, a naturopathic nutritionist with a specific interest in hormones. Following a deep dive into my medical history, sluggish digestion and diet, she wondered if inflammation in my gut was behind my progesterone problem. 'It's essential that your gut is healed, optimised and in good health,' she said. 'Then it will be more able to effectively absorb nutrients from your food while excreting toxins and unwanted hormones, and improving hormone metabolism.' A nutritional plan was called for.

For the first four weeks, I concentrated on expanding my range – the more diverse the vegetables, the better – while both increasing my intake of antioxidants and balancing my sugar levels to avoid inflaming my gut (by opting for a protein-heavy breakfast, for example). Since cortisol might also be affecting my digestion, I used mindfulness and deep breathing to 'down-regulate' my nervous system before eating, which is supposedly crucial in controlling spikes in the 'stress hormone'. For six weeks, I abstained from alcohol – to improve the efficiency of my liver's detoxifying function – as well as dairy and ultra-processed foods; and I significantly cut down my gluten intake. Wherever possible, I prioritised wild-caught fish and organic meat, thereby reducing pesticide and toxin exposure. And to give my hormones the best chance of balancing, I stopped drinking raw tap water, which contains chemicals such as lead and mercury, not to mention trace-hormones from birth-control pills; and instead installed a filtration system called Water2, which I plumbed in under my sink.

On top of my hormone hacks, I took supplements for 'internal balance': Wild Nutrition's Pre-Menstrual Support, which contains magnesium, zinc, milk-thistle and ashwagandha powder; Wild Nutrition's vitamin D, 'essential' ▷



**BALANCING ACT**  
*Hormonal replacement therapy and natural remedies can help you attain better hormonal and mental health*

◁ for hormone health and a good immune system; and agnus castus, to balance oestrogen and progesterone. I also explored the ayurvedic practice of ‘seed cycling’, which Shand thought would ‘gently nudge the hormones’ in the right directions. It works like this: during the follicular fortnight of your cycle (menstruation to ovulation) you consume a tablespoon of ground flax seeds and one of pumpkin seeds every day, to ‘support oestrogen metabolism and naturally’. Then, in your luteal fortnight you switch to a spoon of sesame seeds and one of sunflower seeds.

‘The zinc in the sesame seeds and the vitamin E in the sunflower seeds will help to stimulate production of progesterone,’ claimed Shand. Meanwhile, ‘the lignans in the sesame seeds help to stop excess oestrogen, and the selenium in sunflower seeds helps to support liver detoxification’. But whatever was helping what, after three months of the new nutritional protocol – in tandem with my gym sessions – I began to notice some changes. My digestion and gut issues were much improved. I felt stronger and fitter. I had gained muscle mass. And my PMS? It had become much more manageable. Yes, I still had – and have – mood swings, but not those depressive lows. And instead of struggling through 10 difficult days, I was down to one or two.

Content but convinced there was more I could do in the same vein, I packed my bags for SHA Mexico. This spa on the coast of Cancún, backed by cutting-edge research, is where the super-rich come for health MOTs and to utilise its Disneyland of innovative gadgets (including Icaros, a virtual reality strengthening contraption). I was enrolled on the Rebalance and Energise programme, whose menu of treatments aims to ‘relieve stress, rebalance the body’s systems and revitalise its cellular functions, providing maximum recovery and boosting vital energy’. After



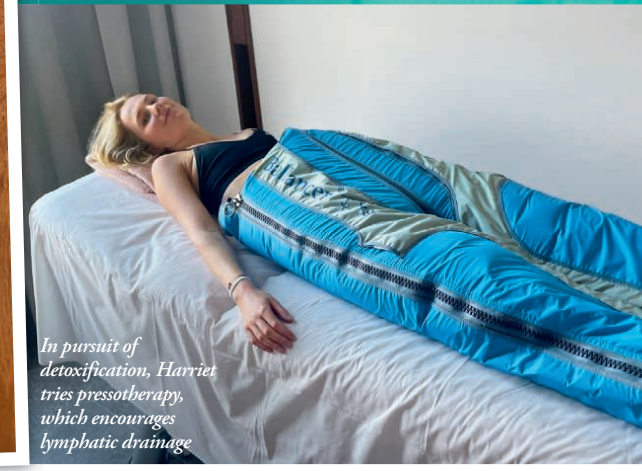
*Harriet Kean's energy levels are assessed in a Biomagnetic Optimal Equilibrium session*



*Between appointments on the Rebalance and Energise programme at SHA Mexico*



*SHA Mexico: the clinic was created as a result of the founder's personal experience and specialises in integrative medicine*



*In pursuit of detoxification, Harriet tries pressotherapy, which encourages lymphatic drainage*

consulting with SHA’s roster of doctors – including one who recommended a diindolylmethane supplement, thought to inhibit oestrogen production – I resolved to focus on managing my wellbeing to prevent any remaining symptoms ‘tipping into PMDD’.

My priorities were detoxification, building more muscle in the gym overlooking the aquamarine sea and controlling my stress levels; and I spent my time drifting from appointment to appointment in a fluffy white robe. There was cupping, which improves blood flow and is said to regulate hormones. There was pressotherapy, which is excellent for lymphatic drainage, and then acupuncture. After measuring my electromagnetic energy and evaluating my ‘blockages’, the gentle Miguel inserted his needles

in my stomach. ‘This will help to relieve your cramps next cycle,’ he told me. My final session was a Hydroenergetic Detox Cure involving a seaweed wrap, a Jacuzzi, multiple light therapies and a cold-water hose. Then it was time to fly home.

Relaxed and reborn, I wanted to persist in my mission. Back in London, I booked in with Ross Barr, the renowned acupuncturist at the sumptuous spa at Claridge’s. That was followed by a ‘trauma-releasing myofascial massage’ with Deodata at new members’ wellness club Rebase. Next, it was off to Ana Trida for a lymph-draining massage at her studio in Marylebone. ‘It will help you by increasing circulation, reducing inflammation and swelling, strengthening the immune system and releasing the excess

hormones that could be causing disruption,’ she said.

The upshot of all this is that my cycles have become far less turbulent. What worked best, however, I can’t really say. SHA was right: it’s your whole lifestyle that determines your symptoms. For example, after Glastonbury festival – when I had little sleep and one too many margaritas – my luteal phase was a war of pain; but then, there have been months when my PMS was much less intense than before. I just have to be careful with my diet – keeping alcohol, sugar and processed foods to a minimum – while maintaining my exercise, detoxing and stress-reduction. And if I’m a work in progress, I am at least controlling my symptoms. And leading a much happier life, in which my luteal phase does not define me. □