

HELP! I'M ON MY PERIOD AND EVERYTHING IS WHACK

Women are complex. Everything about us is nuanced - especially our hormones! Some women experience dramatic differences in terms of energy, mood, and appetite, based on the phase of our cycle. Instead of feeling powerless and at the mercy of our hormones, we can use this information to our benefit! Let's see what we can expect in each phase and how we can use it to our advantage.

Keep in mind: Estrogen (E) is the Feel-Good hormone - it makes us feel positive, energetic, and motivated. Progesterone (P) is the Debbie Downer hormone - it makes us feel moody, tired, less focused, and hungry.

MENSTRUAL PHASE (DAYS 1-7)

What's happening: E & P at their lowest

How you might feel:

- Low energy
- Crampy or bloated
- Low motivation to exercise
- Low appetite OR increased cravings

What to do: Be easy on yourself (if needed)

It's ok to take things down a notch this week - lower the intensity of your workouts if you must, or even reduce the number of sets. Don't beat yourself up for not giving 100%, but also - don't use this as an excuse to take a week off. Be honest with yourself and listen to your body. Food-wise, if you must give in to cravings, make sure to eat protein with every meal and snack to keep you full and avoid those insulin spikes.

FOLLICULAR PHASE (DAYS 8-14)

What's happening: E starts to rise

How you might feel:

- Increased energy
- Better mood and mental clarity
- Easier muscle gains and recovery
- Less likely to have cravings

What to do: Go to motherf---ing TOWN

This is when you really give it your all - and your "all" might surprise you! Push your limits every workout - increase # reps and/or weight as often as possible. What's really cool: E makes you more insulin-sensitive. This means your body manages carbs more efficiently - fueling your workouts, supporting recovery, and being put toward lean muscle instead of fat storage. If there's ever a time to enjoy a carby meal out - it's now.

OVULATION (AROUND DAY 14)

What's happening: E peaks

How you might feel:

- Super energized
- Confident, strong, social
- Increased sex drive
- Appetite is variable

What to do: Mourn that it only lasts one day!

JK. But this day you ARE Superwoman. This is when you're the strongest and the most focused and determined. You probably won't have much trouble sticking to your diet this day. Importantly (of course, there has to be a caveat), E also causes our joints to be more loose and flexible. This is helpful for some things, but we have to be especially careful of our form while lifting, since looser joints are more at risk of injury.

LUTEAL PHASE (DAYS 15-28)

What's happening: E & P fluctuate

How you might feel:

- Energy, mood, and appetite are all variable
- Generally - low energy, fatigue, irritable
- Bloating, cravings, mood swings, brain fog
- Slower recovery from workouts

What to do: Listen to your body

You may feel great, you may feel crappy, it may be different day to day. This is never an excuse to throw in the towel or eat a bunch of garbage. If you have low energy, instead of skipping the gym, tell yourself you'll do your best - even if it's not a mind-blowingly amazing workout. Or take a long walk instead and do the workout the next day. Always remember - it's not all-or-nothing; it's "Do the best you can as often as you can."