

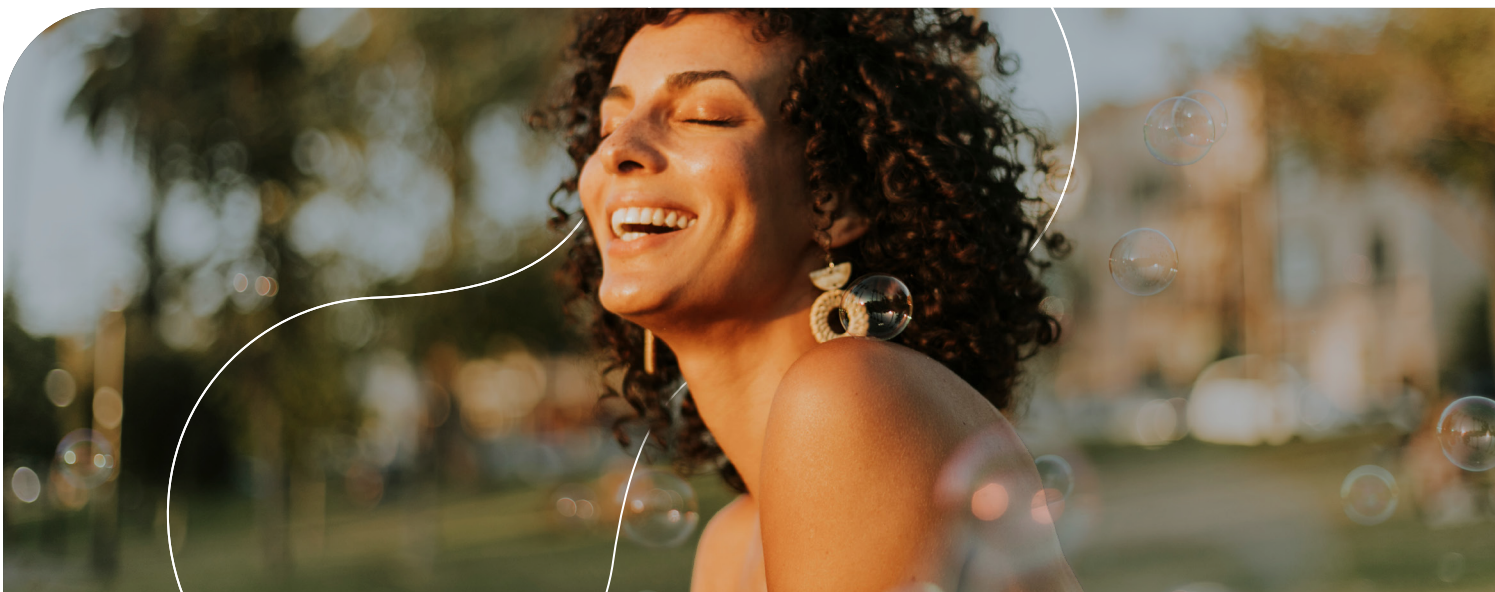
Hormones and mood: what changes across the month

If your mood, sleep, or energy seem to shift for no clear reason, your hormones may be part of the picture. One week you feel focused and sociable. Another, the same tasks feel heavier, sleep is lighter, and small things get under your skin.

Many people notice these patterns without ever having them explained. It is easy to wonder whether you are imagining it, or to blame yourself for not feeling the same every day. In reality, hormone levels change across the menstrual cycle, and those changes can genuinely affect how you feel.

We are increasingly gaining a better scientific understanding of why hormonal shifts affect some people much more intensely than others. Research suggests there may be physical differences in hormone levels, the size and timing of hormonal fluctuations, the number and sensitivity of hormone receptors, and the way our brains respond to these changes. In other words, these differences are not simply a matter of someone being “tougher” or more “emotionally unregulated”. As is so often the case, there is a biological basis for much of the variation in how we experience hormonal changes.

This guide is for anyone who has a menstrual cycle, at any age or stage. It explains what changes across the month, how it can affect mood, sleep, and energy, and what can help. Knowing your own pattern will not remove the ups and downs, but it can make them easier to understand and work with.





Why hormones affect how you feel

Hormones are chemical messengers. Across the menstrual cycle, levels of two key hormones, oestrogen and progesterone, rise and fall in a repeating pattern.

These hormones do more than manage the cycle itself. They also interact with the brain systems that shape mood, sleep, and energy. When their levels change, how you feel can change with them.

This does not mean your feelings are only chemistry. Life, stress, and sleep all matter too. But hormone shifts can turn the volume up or down on how you experience everything else, which is why the same week can feel very different depending on where you are in your cycle.

Everyone's pattern is different. Some people notice only small shifts. Others feel them strongly. Cycles also vary in length, and hormonal contraception, recent pregnancy, and the years approaching menopause can all change the pattern. Your experience is the version that matters.



What changes across the month

A typical cycle is around a month long, though normal cycles vary. It can help to think of it in four rough phases. The days below are a guide, not a rule.

During your period. Hormone levels are at their lowest. Many people feel tired and slower, especially in the first days, and cramps or heavy bleeding can add to that. Energy often begins to lift as bleeding eases.

After your period. Oestrogen rises. This is when many people feel their mood lift and their energy return. Sleep often feels easier, focus sharper, and plans more appealing.

Around ovulation. Oestrogen peaks near the middle of the cycle. Some people feel at their best here, sociable and confident. Others notice little, and a few feel briefly off as levels change. All of these are normal.

The week or so before your period. Oestrogen and progesterone fall. This is when premenstrual symptoms tend to appear. You might feel more irritable, anxious, tearful, or flat. Sleep can be lighter, energy lower, and cravings stronger. For many people, this is the hardest part of the month.

None of these phases decide how you will feel. They shift the odds. Knowing which week you are in can help you make sense of a low day, rather than treating it as a verdict on your life.

The month at a glance

			
Your period:	After your period:	Around ovulation:	Before your period:
energy often lowest, lifting as bleeding eases	mood and energy tend to rise	many feel at their best, some feel briefly off	mood, sleep, and energy often dip

A guide, not a rule. Your own pattern is the one that counts.



When it feels like more than ups and downs

Some premenstrual change is common. But for some people, the days before a period bring symptoms severe enough to disrupt work, relationships, or daily life. If your mood drops sharply in the week or two before your period, and lifts once it starts, it is worth speaking to a doctor. Very severe premenstrual mood symptoms have a name, PMDD, and effective support exists.

It is also worth talking to a doctor if your cycle has changed noticeably, if bleeding is very heavy or painful, or if low mood, anxiety, or exhaustion continue all month rather than coming and going. Ongoing symptoms may have another cause that deserves attention.

Keeping a simple note of your mood, sleep, and energy alongside your cycle for two or three months can make any conversation with a doctor much more useful. Patterns that are hard to see day to day often become clear on paper.



Small changes that help

You cannot control your hormones, but you can work with your pattern rather than against it.



Learn your own rhythm. Track how you feel across a couple of cycles, using an app or a note on your phone. Once you know your pattern, the harder days become predictable rather than confusing.



Plan with your cycle in mind. Where you have the choice, place demanding commitments in the weeks you usually feel stronger, and keep the premenstrual days lighter. Even small adjustments can reduce the strain.



Protect sleep on the harder days. Sleep is often lighter before your period, so give it more room. An earlier night, a wind-down you keep to, and less caffeine late in the day all help.



Keep moving, gently. Regular movement supports mood and sleep across the whole cycle. On low-energy days, gentle counts. A short walk helps more than a workout you dread.



Be straightforward with yourself and others. A low week is not a failing. Naming it, to yourself or to people close to you, can take the pressure off pretending everything is even.



Hormones and how you feel about yourself

Cycle-related mood changes can be hard on your confidence. It is unsettling to feel capable one week and overwhelmed the next, and easy to draw harsh conclusions about yourself from the low days.

It can also be isolating. Premenstrual symptoms are often dismissed, joked about, or waved away, which makes it harder to take your own experience seriously and to ask for understanding when you need it.

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At HealthHero, we often speak to people who have spent years riding these monthly changes without ever connecting them to their cycle. Many blame themselves for the low weeks, or worry that something is wrong with them. When people map how they feel against their cycle, there is often real relief in seeing the pattern. It is easier to be kind to yourself about a difficult week when you can see it coming and know it will pass. If the lows are deep, or they are not passing, that is worth taking seriously, not managing alone.



When to reach out, and how HealthHero can help

It may help to reach out if cycle-related mood changes are affecting your work, relationships, or how you feel about yourself, if the premenstrual days feel unmanageable, or if low mood and anxiety are staying rather than passing.

How HealthHero can help

Questions about your cycle, bleeding, or physical symptoms are best answered by a doctor, and the emotional side deserves support in its own right.

Through your EAP, you can speak to a qualified counsellor in confidence, at a time that suits you. You can talk through how the monthly changes are affecting you, find ways to manage

the harder days, and get support for low mood or anxiety alongside any medical care.

You do not need a crisis to reach out. Support is there to help you feel more able to manage, all month round.



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digital clinic

Contact HealthHero today for more support and advice. We're with you every step of the way.

All information correct as of August, 2026