Your Menstrual Cycle and Digestion: Why Bloating and Bowel Habits Change

HOW YOUR CYCLE TALKS TO YOUR GUT

Your gut responds to estrogen and progesterone, so fluctuating hormone levels can affect digestion.

1 Speed: how fast food moves through

- High progesterone can slow digestion.
- Slower digestion may cause constipation and fullness.

2 Sensitivity: how strongly you feel it

- Hormonal changes can heighten gut sensitivity.
- This can make bloating feel more intense.

PERIOD BLOATING: WHY IT OFTEN PEAKS BEFORE YOUR PERIOD STARTS

Slower movement

Gas and stool stay in longer and create pressure

Fluid retention

the body may hold on to more salt and water

A more sensitive gut

A normal amount of gas may simply feel like more

A bigger appetite

Increased hunger may lead to larger meals and fullness

WHAT HAPPENS TO DIGESTION AT EACH STAGE OF THE CYCLE?



Cycle stage	Hormone pattern	Common gut changes
Menstruation **Days 1 to 5**	Estrogen and progesterone low; prostaglandins rise	Looser or more frequent stools, urgency, cramping
Follicular **Days 6 to 13**	Estrogen rising	Often the most settled time of the month
Ovulation **~ Day 14**	Estrogen peaks, then drops	Mild bloating or a brief change in bowel habits for some
Luteal **Days 15 to 28**	Progesterone high, then falling	Bloating, fullness, constipation, bigger appetite

WHAT MAY HELP WITH CYCLE RELATED GUT SYMPTOMS

Track & record symptoms



Add fibre slowly



Drink enough fluids



Move often



Look after sleep and stress



Seek medical advice if you experience: Persistent bloating - Bloody or black stools - Unexplained weight loss Severe or disruptive pain - Lasting bowel changes - Ongoing fatigue or low iron - Pain during sex or difficulty conceiving

For the complete article, visit: https://cdhf.ca/en/your-menstrual-cycle-and-digestion-why-bloating-and-bowel-habits-change/

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