



The Best in Natural Health

Natural Health Guidance Series

Natural Medicines for Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and Menstrual Problems

By

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Natural Medicines for Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and Menstrual Problems

Many women treat premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and other menstrual irregularities as a normal part of their life. In reality, menstruation should not cause any significant interruption to your everyday life. If you experienced symptoms of PMS, painful, heavy or irregular periods, it means that your reproductive system is not functioning as well as it should be.

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) is the most common female hormonal imbalance, affecting more than 75% of women at some stage of their lives. PMS normally occurs in the second half of a woman's menstrual cycle, between ovulation and the onset of menstruation. Psychological symptoms of PMS include mood swings, anxiety, irritability, nervous tension, depression, forgetfulness, poor concentration, fatigue or even insomnia. Physical symptoms can include weight gain from fluid retention, abdominal bloating, headaches, libido issues, constipation and/or diarrhoea.

PMS normally occurs as a result of imbalances in female reproductive hormones, particularly, low levels of progesterone throughout the cycle with elevated oestrogen levels during the second half of the cycle. It can also be related to "bad" oestrogens and not enough "good" oestrogens. High levels of another hormone, prolactin may also be involved.

Other menstrual problems may include painful periods, irregular periods or heavy periods. Painful periods can cause severe abdominal cramping, lower back and upper leg pain, headache, nausea/vomiting or even diarrhoea. High oestrogen levels or too much of the "bad" oestrogens may be a primary cause of painful periods. Some women may also experience irregular periods such as amenorrhoea (the absence of a menstrual cycle during a woman's reproductive years for reasons other than pregnancy or lactation) or oligomenorrhoea (infrequent or very scant menstruation), which may be caused by hormonal imbalances, low body weight, stress and/or over-exercising. Heavy periods or menorrhagia (a term for excessive and/or prolonged menstrual bleeding) can also be an indication of menstrual problems.

How can you balance your hormone levels?

You can use a range of herbs and nutrients to correct hormonal imbalances. Vitex agnus castus has been shown to assist in the management of PMS symptoms by reducing high amounts of prolactin and normalising progesterone levels. Vitex can also help with irregular periods. The benefits of Vitex can be enhanced by adding herbs such as evodia, ginger, cinnamon and dong quai. These herbs have a long history of use for managing painful, heavy or irregular periods and PMS symptoms such as headaches, sore breasts, fluid retention and abdominal bloating.

Are mood swings driving you mad? Is stress worsening your menstrual cycle or is your menstrual cycle worsening your stress? If you know that stress is a contributing factor to your menstrual problems, herbs such as bupleurum and Chinese peony may be used. Bupleurum can help with emotional instability and mood swings while Chinese peony is commonly used for regulating the menstrual cycle and reducing PMS symptoms. When used with other PMS herbs such as nutgrass, tree peony, licorice and gardenia, symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, anger and mood swings can be easily managed.

Other natural ingredients which may help to maintain a healthy oestrogen balance include:

- Flaxseed which supports the production of "good" oestrogens, whilst reducing the production of "bad" oestrogens;
- Polygonum and Kudzu which contain constituents that can help regulate the effects of oestrogen on the body;
- Turmeric which offers potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity;
- Folic acid, vitamin B6 and B12, which assist the processing of oestrogen in the body.

Apart from herbs, some simple changes to your diet and lifestyle can greatly improve your menstrual cycle:

- consume a diet rich in fibre which includes fruit and vegetables;
- increase the intake of good fats such as those from nuts, seeds and fish;
- drink lots of water (1-2 litres a day);
- keep yourself active with regular exercise;
- stop smoking;
- reduce excess fat;

- limit salt and saturated fat intake; and
- reduce caffeine and alcohol consumption.

PMS and other menstrual irregularities are not a normal part of life. You don't have to put up with the discomfort or pain. Don't let your monthly menstrual cycle hinder your ability to do your favourite activities and enjoy life! Herbs and nutrients, with the appropriate dietary and lifestyle changes can let you take charge of your menstrual cycle again.

I hope you find this information useful and enjoyed this as much as I love to share it. Feel free to forward this article and share this information with the people you love. Check out our services at www.nutriactionz.co.nz. Also join my fan page at www.facebook.com/nutriactionz.

Live healthily, love deeply and make everyday an extraordinary adventure,

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