

Pain free periods



The monthly menses can really cramp your lifestyle. Enlist earth's remedies to ride the wave with ease.

Going from girlhood to womanhood can be a tricky transition. The adjustment from carefree youth to pad dependant puberty is seamless for some. Others suffer unpredictable periods, pain, flooding, sore breasts and mood swings. Branded an inconvenience in modern times, traditional cultures celebrate menstruation as a momentous rite of passage to new perceptions and procreative possibilities. Rather than a curse the monthly menses is a blessing for balance. The womb room is cleansed as the lining sloughs off leaving a renewed uterus. Accumulated toxins in the bloodstream are removed which some attribute to women's longer lifespan. Women in touch with the ebb and flow of hormonal tides can adjust their lifestyle to minimise menstrual issues and welcome the wondrous cycle.

Hormone harmony

The term hormone comes from the Greek "hormao" or to excite as they trigger radical changes in our state. Women in

indigenous cultures were encouraged to have a restful retreat while menstruating to access intuition and cleanse completely. Science shows during ovulation women are more extroverted and creative and during menstruation they are more introverted and hypersensitive. During menstruation the senses are weaker while thinking, feeling and memory are stronger.

The converse is true during ovulation with a decrease in pain sensitivity and an increase in the external senses of smell, hearing and sight. The cyclical nature of females allows them to regularly flush their mind and body of impurities and enjoy varied emotions through the month.

Mirroring Mother Nature's cycles healthy women experience approximately 450 periods monthly over 40 years. Period problems may indicate imbalances in many areas of the body as hormones are affected by all systems. Exclusively addressing issues through pharmaceutical medication and contraception fails to get long-term, effective results as deeper underlying factors haven't been altered.

All systems of the body are involved with the menstrual process - the endocrine glands stimulate hormone secretion, the adrenal glands assist in their manufacture, the liver helps to break them down and the musculo-skeletal system with the

gastrointestinal system assists in their elimination. Recognising the interplay of all these factors acknowledges that menstrual health is reliant on quality of life and treatment requires assessing all aspects including nutrition, habits, stress and supplements.

Herbal help

Dysmenorrhoea can indicate endometriosis or fibroids which require a personal prescription. General herbs for cramps include cramp bark, wild yam, kava kava, raspberry leaf and valerian. Lady's mantle lightens heavy periods and spotting through its astringent tannins. Other herbs for heavy flow are shepherd's purse, shatavari, crane's bill and oak bark.

Vitex agnus-castus is my firm favourite for fertility, irregular periods and PMT. Vitex reduces irritability, fluid retention, and breast pain. It promotes progesterone via the pituitary, hence its best to take in the morning when this gland is receptive. Take for 25 days a month and have a break while bleeding. Vitex shouldn't be used with fertility drugs or IVF as this can cause ovarian hyper-stimulation syndrome.

Aromatherapy oils to assist periods include clary sage for hormonal imbalances, Roman chamomile for cramps, lavender for PMT and rose for reproductive health. ☺



Go with the flow

Many experience relief from irregular periods, pain and heavy periods with these everyday adjustments.

- Exercise regularly to increase circulation and endorphins, clearing congestion and muscular tension that can cause cramps.
- Sleep near a window and retire before 10pm to regulate hormones.
- Regular self-massage balances Apana Vata which manages menstruation according to Ayurveda.
- Rest on the first three days of bleeding to encourage elimination. Avoid travel, late nights and exercise except light stretching.
- Reduce sex as lowered vaginal acidity during menses makes women more susceptible to infections and thrush through intercourse. Sex is also contrary to the downward flow of menses.
- Prefer a menstrual cup or organic pads to tampons to avoid toxicity and encourage complete cleansing.
- Meditate to access heightened awareness and minimise stress.
- Diet during menstruation can be light, liquid, warm, cooked food as the digestion is weaker at this time. Avoid gas promoting and drying foods. Adding asafoetida, chia seeds, cumin, ginger, mint and fennel to foods or teas can ease painful periods.
- During the month ensure adequate hydration, essential fatty acids, fibre, magnesium, calcium, iron, protein, zinc, vitamin E and B's.
- Minimise animal fats, caffeine, vegetable oil, alcohol, sugar, salt, soft drinks, fried foods, cold foods and smoking.



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