

Hello,

Thank you for reading my newsletter. The topic of this newsletter is PMS.

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PMS is something that I see many women suffer with in my practice however I am happy to say that the symptoms can be dramatically reduced or eliminated in as little time as three months.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of Premenstrual Syndrome is often easy to make for most although some may need to only ask their partner if they notice any mood changes before or during their cycle. The most common symptoms of PMS would include irritability, outbursts of anger, moodiness, sadness or depression. Physical symptoms can include abdominal pain, back pain, breast distension, headaches, bowel changes, acne, insomnia and food cravings.

Chinese medicine views most of these symptoms as a result of a blockage of energy and restriction of the flow of qi and blood within the body which causes pain, mood changes etc. These blockages can come from qi stagnation, cold, heat or deficiency. A full medical consultation and evaluation will be performed to determine the underlying cause of your symptoms.

Treatment Protocol

The most common diagnosis for PMS include

- **qi stagnation**- breast distension, irritability, frequent sighing, depression, abdominal pain
- **blood deficiency**- depression and sadness, crying, tired, scanty periods, poor sleep, dizziness, poor memory
- **deficiency heat**- irritability before or during menstruation, sore back, poor memory, insomnia, dry eyes, feeling of heat, night sweats
- **deficiency cold**- sadness, depression, breast distention, back pain, cold abdomen, feeling cold, low sex drive, frequent urination
- **liver fire**- severe headaches in the eyes or temples, red face, bitter taste, dry stools, irritability

Once a diagnosis is made then a treatment strategy can be implemented combining acupuncture, herbal medicine, lifestyle and dietary suggestions.

Acupuncture- this has been shown to lower stress levels and increase the blood flow to the reproductive organs to alleviate PMS symptoms.

Chinese Herbal Medicine- a personalized herbal formula will be prescribed to be taken daily for approximately three months. A study involving 3500 women found that Chinese herbs may be more effective in relieving menstrual cramps than non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, the oral contraceptive pill, heat or placebo according to the Cochrane Library Journal. In one trial 53% of the women who took herbs reported less pain than usual compared to 26% in the placebo group.

Lifestyle Suggestions

-**Stress Reduction**- I know that I say this over and over again but it is so important! Anything that we can do to lower our stress will help with qi flow and help with PMS symptoms. This may include moderate exercise, meditation, yoga, qigong, journaling, going for a walk, taking a bubble bath, reading and taking time for you. Please see my previous newsletter for more tips on lowering stress levels with Chinese medicine.

- **Sleep**- most of us our sleep deprived. It is important to get at least 7-9 hours of sleep per night as this is the time that are body is able to restore and heal.

Dietary Suggestions

- caffeine- eliminating caffeine prior to menstruation had been found to lessen abdominal pain and irritability
- fish oil supplement- taking a good quality fish oil supplement has been shown to have anti inflammatory effects helping with menstrual cramps.

Question of the Month

I have been suffering with severe breast distension, irritability and menstrual headaches prior to menstruation ever since I can remember. Could these be contributing to my diagnosis of infertility?

Yes, any pain, mood changes, headaches are all symptoms of subtle imbalances within the body that need to be corrected. One of the first goals in treating infertility is to regulate the menstrual cycle and eliminate any adverse side effects. Once the body is in balance the menstrual cycle should be symptom free.

What's New?

I attended a very interesting seminar on Infertility last month given by Brandon Horn and his wife Wendy Yu who practice in California. The topic was improving Poor Ovarian Reserve with Chinese Medicine. They have had much success treating women who are of advanced maternal age or who have been turned away from IVF clinics due to poor ovarian reserve. The seminar was very informative with many new diagnostic techniques that I am starting to incorporate into my clinic.

I was just over in Vancouver again in March to attend another conference given by Debra Betts an acupuncturist from New Zealand who is a specialist in Obstetrics and the author of "The Essential Guide to Acupuncture in Pregnancy and Childbirth" Debra has an amazing amount of clinically based knowledge as she has prepared thousands of women for birth. I am very happy to have had the chance to meet her as she is very passionate about spreading the word of the benefits of acupuncture in pregnancy and childbirth.

Again, I would like to thank you for your referrals. They are very important to me. If you know of anyone who could benefit from this newsletter please share it with them.