



Nature's Own Wellness
Medicine . . . the Way Nature Intended

**Free at Last! Traditional Chinese Medicine Stops Painful Periods, Restores
Harmony to Your Menstrual Cycle**
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The term “painful periods” describes abdominal or low back pain that occurs before, during or after menstruation. It can be dull or sharp, and is frequently associated with contractions to evacuate blood stored in the tissue that lines the uterus (endometrium) after ovulation. In severe cases, nausea and vomiting or fainting may accompany these pains.

Traditional Chinese Medicine contends that liver “Qi” is the primary energy source responsible for menstruation. Ancient medical texts liken the liver to an army’s general because it manages and directs the overall planning of all body functions requiring the smooth flow of Qi (energy) and blood throughout the body. The liver regulates blood volume, consistency, and rate of flow throughout a woman’s menstrual cycle. Healthy menstruation requires the free and abundant flow of liver Qi and blood. If this flow falters for any reason, the exodus of blood from the uterus backs up, causing hyper contractions in the uterus and referred pain in the abdomen or lower back. Chinese Medicine calls this back-flow “stagnation” and identifies it as the primary cause for painful periods. A key sign that liver Qi has stagnated is the presence of clots in the menstrual blood.

The most common cause for painful menstruation is linked to the pathogenic influence of “cold” and/or “damp” weather, especially on young bodies during puberty. Scantly dressed young girls may play outdoor games or school sports in inclement weather, or lounge around in wet bathing suits after swimming. The cold or damp enters through the open skin pores, gaining too easy access to the energetic organs and channels that supply the uterus with Qi and blood. These influences congeal the normal flow of Qi and blood.

Other more complex causes for painful periods usually begin later in life, and may be associated with organic problems such as endometriosis, pelvic inflammatory disease, or uterine myomas. Despite the complexity of these adult pathologies, the root of Chinese Medical diagnosis is still Qi and blood stagnation. Treatment involves the use of acupuncture and herbs to soothe and regulate liver function by moving Qi and improving the circulation of blood. Depending on the physician’s assessment of the prevailing pattern of disharmony, treatment may also focus on expelling cold, resolving dampness, or clearing away other pernicious influences obstructing normal flow. Harmonizing and strengthening herbs are included in the treatment plan in order to increase overall energy and wellness.

In terms of dietary influence, the liver can be especially stressed by the western habit of consuming “junk” food on a regular basis. The liver’s second main function is to detoxify chemicals that accumulate in the body due to poor diet or environmental exposure. Greasy fried food, high sugar snacks, carbonated soft drinks (including diet sodas), and dairy products clog up liver function. Iced drinks, ice cream, raw salads or any food consumed cold, dramatically slow digestion, literally “chilling out” the entire upper and lower abdomen. A congested liver, cold Qi and blood, all translate into “pain” especially during menstruation.

Long-term emotional strain also inhibits normal menstrual circulation. This can manifest as emotional irritability, depression, painful swollen breasts, and abdominal distention before or during menstruation. Many of us have insufficient coping mechanisms for dealing with the complexity and speed of our daily lives. Input from our emotional bodies is often ignored or suppressed so that we can simply get through the events of each day. Chinese Medicine

believes that liver function is most susceptible to stagnation by emotions involving some form of resistance—especially anger. In simplest terms, the degree of emotional resistance experienced is equivalent to the degree of obstructed Qi and blood, and consequent pain. It may take a lifetime to acquire and perfect coping skills to ensure emotional and physiological harmony. In the meantime, Chinese Medicine, including acupuncture and herbal prescriptions, has a long history of successfully restoring balance not only to the process of menstruation, but to our entire organism, improving our ability to engage fully in life without monthly pain and misery.