



# Pre Menstrual Tension

As a woman approaches her menstruation, different hormonal changes occur, oestrogen and progesterone levels will drop causing the uterus's lining to shed.

Prior and during the period, for many women, it is not uncommon to experience very unsettling emotions. Emotions may vary from anger or agitation to anxiety or depressive feelings. Western medicine cannot chiefly explain the causes of PMT except that some women are more sensitive to hormonal changes. Presented here are two key Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) explanations as to why some women experience the dreaded PMT.

## TCM approach to assist the angst

### *Liver Qi Stagnation*

According to TCM, the liver plays a crucial role in the menstrual cycle. The liver is also closely linked with the emotional state of a person. If the Qi of the liver is blocked, this will impact on the smooth flow of the period. Factors which could cause Liver Qi Stagnation could be: emotional stress, alcohol, excessive spicy or greasy food or a combination of these. Liver Qi Stagnation will cause anger or a state of agitation prior to the period. Other associated symptoms may include sharp period pain, uncomfortable bloating and hot and restless sleep. If this pattern is left untreated often liver blood will become stagnant which represents a deeper TCM pathology and the symptoms will be worse. Suffice to say these symptoms make life unpleasant for one to two weeks per month.

### *Qi and Blood Deficiency*

The process of the period and the actual bleeding that occurs can be quite draining on the body. If a woman's overall health is deficient or drained - perhaps due to physical stress, over exercising or child birth - the menstrual cycle can be another pressure placed on the body. Blood deficiency will cause fatigue and often an agitated anxious state during and after the period. This TCM body pattern can develop into more serious problems like depression, anxiety attacks and lack of concentration. TCM stipulates it is crucial to nourish and strengthen the body to help prevent the monthly emotional roller coaster. In Western medicine it is quite common for these emotional issues to be treated by medication of an anti depressive/anxiety nature. This Western

medicine approach will help manage day to day life but the root cause will remain as will other symptoms of fatigue and pain.

\*NB people with medically diagnosed anxiety or depression should continue taking their prescribed medication unless otherwise directed by their doctor.

## Treatment

TCM offers a very comprehensive treatment for PMT. A course of acupuncture and Chinese herbs will create positive results within one to two menstrual cycles. Weekly acupuncture treatments with a course of Chinese herbs are normally recommended. The herbs I prescribe are in granule form and are easily dissolved in a small amount of boiling water. Alternatively patent formulas are available with herbs in pill or capsule form. Acupuncture will create relief quickly and the herbs will create a sustainable result.

## Tips to help along the way

- Both you (and your partner) should be aware of what stage in your cycle you're in.
- Avoid stress or tiring events prior to the period
- Not too much alcohol or spicy food before the period
- Avoid hard physical training during or straight after the period
- Chrysanthemum and peppermint tea will help to disperse tension during pre period time.
- Get some help, life can be busy enough without having to cope with volatile emotions