



Pre-menstrual syndrome or tension (PMT)

Pre-menstrual syndrome

Is a term used to describe physical and emotional changes within the body leading up to menstruation. Not all women experience these changes, however some women will experience changes up to 14 days before menstruation. Symptoms may include: depression, sadness, irritability, anxiety, palpitations, lethargy/ fatigue, loss of concentration, aggressiveness, changes in libido, changes in bowel habit, skin eruptions/ acne, food cravings, crying, anger, clumsiness, distension of abdomen and breasts, fluid retention, headache, and insomnia.

Hormonal view on PMS/PMT

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) appears to relate to fluctuations in oestrogen and progesterone. Oestrogen and progesterone may cause transitory fluid retention, which seems to explain some PMS symptoms.

Western treatment of PMS/PMT

Treatment involves relief of symptoms. Fluid retention may be relieved by using a diuretic (which promotes sodium and water excretion), however it may not relieve all symptoms and often has no effect. Counselling is sometimes recommended for women and their partners to help cope with PMS; however in my experience this is often frustrating with little effect. For some women, hormonal manipulation is effective. Regimens include oral contraceptives; progesterone 10 to 12 days premenstrually; a long-acting progestin; or a gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonist with low-dose oestrogen-progestin "add-back" therapy to eliminate cyclic changes. Tranquillisers may be used for irritability, nervousness, and lack of control, especially if patients cannot alter their stressful environments. Changing the diet (eg, increasing protein, decreasing sugars) and supplementing with vitamin B complex (especially pyridoxine, sometimes with magnesium) may help. Antidepressants are often prescribed, and are believed to be the most effective drugs in the management of psychologic and physical PMS symptoms.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine treatment of PMS/PMT

Chinese medicine believes that women should not experience PMT. The exact signs and symptoms experienced premenstrually create a diagnostic picture for a practitioner. Each woman has a group of symptoms that is unique to her, which tells a TCM practitioner a lot about the whole functioning of her body. Likewise the way a patient digests, sleeps and their medical history are all indications for their menstrual diagnosis. Western medicine will prescribe different treatments for each symptom of PMT, however Chinese medicine will devise one treatment for the whole group of symptoms that is unique to you. Improvements are usually seen between 1-3 months after the commencement of treatment. Women usually feel distinctly healthier because this is an all-natural treatment that incorporates the whole body. Many people believe that because a treatment is natural, that it is less effective or slower. This is definitely not true in women's health and most women will get faster and better results from Chinese medicine. Acupuncture and Chinese herbs are used in the treatment of PMT and like most women's health problems treatment is most effective when combined.