

## **Menstrual problems: cramps, heavy bleeding, PMS, irregularities. And female infertility.**

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## Background: Female hormones

The hypothalamus produces gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH) which makes the pituitary produce either follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) or luteinizing hormone (LH).

FSH makes the follicles produce estrogen and LH makes the corpus luteum produce progesterone.

All of this is very much more smooth if

1. you have raw materials for the various hormones needed (= take missing nutrients) and
2. your liver works nicely and clears out used-up hormonal pieces as and when they arrive in the liver.

Other factors affecting the female hormone cycle are

- stress: makes for more frequent pulses of hormones, upsetting the balance of progesterone and aldosterone, among other things
- thyroid problems:
  - underactive – everything (including female hormones) move more sluggishly;
  - overactive – everything (including female hormones) move at a far faster clip
- digestive problems – here, problems stem from an overworked liver.

## The nutrients

- Magnesium (Mg)
- Chromium
- Zinc
- Vitamin B (especially B2, B5, B6)
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin E
- Fish oil or fatty cold water fish (preferably small and local, like herring)
- Protein
- Iron

Universal deficiency: magnesium + vitamin B

## Menstrual cramps

Menstrual cramps are almost always a nutrient deficiency: we need magnesium (Mg). We also requires vitamin B in order to absorb the magnesium.

It's usually a good idea to take other nutrients as well, if you're deficient in Mg and vitamin B.

Make a milk of magnesium vinegar, make a milk of magnesium bubbly water, or make a magnesium chloride oil and use them every day. Also take vitamin B.

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## Magnesium recipes

- 1 part milk of magnesia, 4 parts vinegar. Mix, let clear. Take 1 tablespoon 2 times a day. (Paul Bergner's recipe)
- or 1 part milk of magnesia, 40 parts bubbly water. Mix (it foams!). Take 3-6 ounces 3 times a day. Take more if your symptoms stay, take less if you get diarrhea.
- or 1 part magnesium chloride, 1 part water. Boil the water, mix in the magnesium chloride and stir until the magnesium chloride is dissolved. Let cool, pour into a spray bottle. Spray on your belly or back. Add more water if it feels too strong.

Also take 50-60 mg vitamins B2, B5, B6 daily (with the other B-vitamins).

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## Menstrual cramps: the herbs

There are a few herbs to stop cramps in their tracks, while you're waiting for the nutrients to kick in. The strongest are angelica root (fairly fresh) and/or calamus root. I tend to recommend these in endometriosis.

Chew the roots of either whenever that cramp hits, but also take Mg + B.

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## Angelica archangelica, angelica.



- chew on a root
- take some tincture
- eat some seeds
- (the leaf is least active part of our local angelica)
- (I've found that dried angelica deteriorates rather fast; dig new roots every year.)
- Note that angelica can make you bleed more.

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**Acorus calamus, calmus.**

- chew on a root
- take some tincture made from the root
- dried calamus tends to get stronger as years go by. This doesn't hold true for all dried roots, though.
- both angelica and calamus work really fast: the cramp hits, you chew on a piece of root, whew, glad that's gone ...

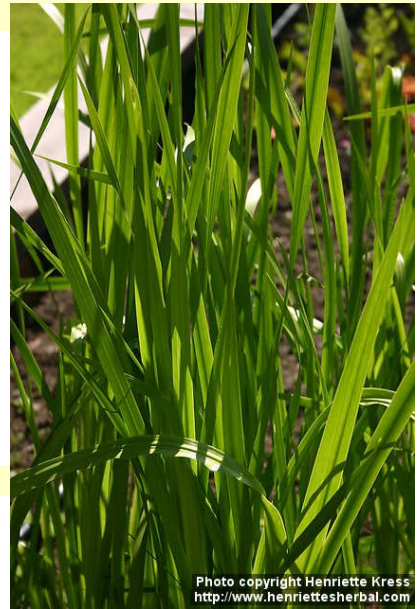


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***Menstrual cramps: more herbs***

- there are a lot of other herbs for cramps. Try oregano or catnip (internally and as a warm poultice), try cramp bark or similar Viburnum barks, or give ginger a try (mmmm, nice warming action!).
- for abdominal adhesions (a complication in some menstrual cramps), try castor oil packs: they work wonders in clearing out scar tissue, and adhesions are just that.

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**Ricinus communis, castor.**

Castor oil pack:

- Warm a tablespoon or so of castor oil
- Apply it to a piece of cloth
- Drape it over your achy abdomen
- Wrap it with a blanket or warm towel
- Relax for about 30 minutes.

Repeat when needed.

(Don't ingest castor oil! Unless, of course, you crave its internal effects.)



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## Heavy menses

Symptom relief: give capsella, or yarrow, or white deadnettle, or your bleeding herb of choice.

Help the cause of the problem:

- help the liver: that helps the whole hormonal system work more evenly,
- the nutrients outlined at the beginning are needed for dopamine production. Dopamine suppresses prolactin, and too much prolactin makes for heavy menses
- give iron tonics. Anemia causes bleeding which causes anemia which causes bleeding.

(Much too much prolactin can be a sign of a pituitary tumor.)

## Capsella bursa-pastoris, shepherd's purse.

- take some tincture
- drink some tea
- eat some green herb
- or dried herb, for that matter.
- (Capsella tastes of old cabbage, but it does work wonders.)
- the tincture works admirably for bleeding even if it's old (years old!). It's the oxytocic effect that's gone in about six months.





## PMS

In all cases of PMS, help the liver.

- I give liver herbs according to [Michael Moore's energetics](#), thus tailoring the herbs to the person.

A more general approach works as well:

- give cooling liver herbs (like dandelion, burdock, bidens, or mugwort) with warming liver herbs (like berberis, yellow dock, or mahonia.)

### **Taraxacum officinale, dandelion.**

- one of the cooling liver herbs (Michael Moore style).
- chew on a piece of dried root
- or eat a dandelion leaf salad
- or take some dandelion root or leaf tea
- or dandelion coffee
- chicory works the same way
- note: dandelion is very diuretic. Also take salt if your blood pressure is low.



### **Berberis, barberry.**

- one of the warming liver herbs (Michael Moore style).
- the tincture works nicely
- but I also add the root (or the bark from the lower parts of branches) to tea blends
- (Mahonia is essentially Berberis, or the other way around.)
- (if the root or lower limb bark isn't yellow, it's not going to work.)



### **PMS, cont'd**

- the "help the liver" approach is very effective ...
- ... provided the lady wants change. If her husband "gifts" her herbal therapy, for her irrational rage every month, herbs won't help in the long run, because she won't take them.

(ladies who feel the need to clear the air every month should buy shoes two sizes too small. Irritability is much easier to control that way.)

## Irregular menses

The problem is, your production of GnRH, LH, FSH and / or estrogen and progesterone doesn't run smoothly.

For regular but too long or too short cycles, blame the estrogen.

Artificial hormones can cause really irregular menses; it takes some time to get things back on track after discontinuing them.

### What to do:

- help the liver
- give missing nutrients.

You can take Vitex (for progesterone production) and dong quai (for estrogen production) if you so like, but you also have to take the missing nutrients.

## Vitex agnus-castus, chaste berry.



- Yes, it will help progesterone production.
- Unfortunately, it does so by raiding nutrient reserves, which are needed to produce dopamine and similar feel-good hormones
- So if you take only Vitex for hormonal problems, without also adding nutrients, you're creating problems for later.

## Infertility: the herbs

My approach includes herbs, nutrients, diet, lifestyle, and sometimes a little psychology.

The herbs:

- lily flowers (Lilium species), fresh herb tincture
- carrot flowers and seeds (Daucus carota) (queen Anne's lace), tincture or dried
- nettle seed (Urtica dioica)
- red raspberry leaf (Rubus idaeus)
- lady's mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris)
- liver herbs
- other herbs as needed

### Lilium species, lilies.



- I tincture the fresh petals of any Lilium species.
- My fresh herb tinctures are 1:2 95 %; the dose is 2-5 drops 1-3 times a day.
- "They" say it should be a white lily, because white signifies innocence
- I've used any color I can lay my hands on, that is, whatever is in flower in my garden when I go after the lily flowers.
- (I used to give it for menstrual cramps, until one lady got pregnant.)

### Daucus carota, carrot / Queen Anne's lace.



- The flowers and/or green and/or brown seeds are used as a contraceptive
- But if you forget to take your carrot seed, you're pregnant.
- Based on that, I've given it for infertility.
- Babies have ensued ...possibly because of carrot, possibly because of the other things I give and do for infertility.



### **Urtica dioica, stinging nettle.**

- The seed, when ripe, hangs down.
- It's a nice adrenal and kidney tonic.
- I use the dried seed and give it in tea- or tablespoon doses to overly tired people.
- Some people get hyper from the fresh seed, others only ever get the "nettle seed" effect from the fresh seed.



### **Alchemilla vulgaris, Lady's mantle**

- The leaf has been used for centuries, to strengthen female reproductive organs.
- The leaf is very very nutritive: perhaps that's why it works?



### ***Infertility: the nutrients***

- The nutrients are important, not only for infertility, but also to minimize risks for birth defects.
- You need B2, B6 and B12 in order to support a pregnancy.

The risk for spina bifida is lowered by about 70 % with an adequate intake of vitamin B.

Almost 80 % of all harelips (with associated heart problems and so on) are eliminated with proper nutrients. The risk for other birth defects is lowered by about 60 %.

- You need magnesium in order to absorb B, and vice versa.
- You need calcium in order to absorb D (= eat your greens!)
- The fat-soluble vitamins (ADEK) require an adequate fat intake.

### ***Infertility: the diet***

- Eat enough protein, fat, greens, vegetables.
- Try to avoid simple carbs: they are magnesium diuretics and thus also deplete your vitamin B. (If you have to eat something sweet, go for quality, not quantity.)
- PCOS is most often caused by metabolic syndrome, which is caused by simple carbs + lack of exercise + lack of vital nutrients.
- Modern soy products upset female hormones.

### ***Infertility: the lifestyle***

- Avoid stress. Your body doesn't have the inclination to get pregnant if it has to run away from that hypothetical lion all the time.
- Olympic-level athletes don't have menses all that often. If you train 7 times a week (not counting your "at home" sets), try to reduce that to something saner. (Unless, of course, you are a top athlete).
- Weight problems: overly thin or overly heavy ladies don't have menses all that often either.
- Artificial hormones really wreck our hormonal system. Give your body some time to recover from them.

### ***Infertility: the fears***

If everything else is OK, the mom-to-be might be afraid of having a baby, so ask her what her fears are.

- She might fear not having time to keep doing the things which are important to her. (Never fear, you'll always find the time to do the things important to you.)
- Or she might fear not having time for herself ..... have her promise to hire a babysitter from the get-go.

(I think I got the advice on addressing the fears is from Susun Weed. Many thanks! A few ladies over here now have babies, thanks to that advice.)

## **About Henriette Kress**

I'm a herbalist in Helsinki, Finland, Europe. I've been practising since 1998. A lot of women have various menstrual problems; a few of them have come to see me for herbal therapy.

Cramps and PMS are easy ... endometriosis is not.

Irregularities can be easy or difficult, depending. I love to try my hand at infertility; it's such a devastating problem for the women or couples involved, and such a great joy when babies arrive. (Sometimes, sadly, babies don't arrive after all.)

[My site](#) is one of the oldest and largest herbal sites on the net.

My book "[Practical Herbs](#)" was published in 2011. It has received rave reviews. Go buy it, if you haven't already! (A new book should be out in 2013).