Believe it or not, the average woman will menstruate about 500 times in her life. Many women are affected monthly from premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Over eighty percent of women suffer from emotional changes prior to menstruation. Most women reach for an over-the-counter drug for a “quick fix” during this time of the month. Many of these drugs can be damaging and may potentially create more health issues in the body over time. Fortunately for us, there is another option, herbal medicine. Let us take a look at a several of these herbs that can be quite beneficial to the menstruating woman.

Many wonderful herbs have been used for centuries to help support women during their moon cycles. The common culinary herb Ginger (Zingiber officinale) works well on several different menstrual symptoms. Ginger is a warming herb that promotes circulation throughout our entire body. It directs blood to the pelvic area and relieves pelvic congestion. It has an anti-spasmodic action that can help to relieve menstrual cramps. Ginger also makes an excellent hot compress and is a great addition to a warm bath during our moon time. For the women who experience premenstrual nausea, a few pieces of crystallized ginger can be chewed throughout the day as a preventative. Crystallized ginger can be found in many health food stores and can be easily made at home. Due to the constitutional differences of each individual, you may wish to start with small amounts of ginger in either tea, tincture, or whole herb form.

Crampbark (Viburnum opulus) and Black Haw (Viburnum prunifolium) are two herbs that have a remarkable affect in easing menstrual cramps. Both herbs are extremely effective for relaxing uterine muscles and keeping menstrual cramps at bay. These two herbs may be used interchangeably, separately, or together. They may be taken in either tea or tincture form. Add fifteen drops of the tincture to one-half ounce water, and drink every fifteen to thirty minutes, or you may drink one cup of tea every fifteen minutes until the cramps subside.

Menstrual tension and anxiety have become more and more prevalent in our ever-growing stress-filled society. My favorite all-time remedy for this is Motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca). Stress and anxiety have met their match with this helpful little herb; it can work almost instantly in acute cases of anxiety, stress, and nervous tension. Not only is motherwort a nervous system tonic, but it’s a reproductive and cardiac tonic as well. Motherwort acts as an emmenagogue, which can stimulate bleeding. This can be particularly helpful for those who experience pelvic congestion. This herb can be extremely helpful if stress is a factor.

Although Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) is considered a liver tonic, this common weed can have a remarkable effect on a woman’s menstrual cycle. Because of its beneficial effects on the liver, dandelion can help regulate hormone production in the body. Dandelion root is often used as a bitter herb to stimulate digestion. Many women that are affected by premenstrual digestive upset could benefit from taking fifteen to thirty drops of dandelion root tincture fifteen minutes before meals. Dandelion leaf is a wonderful, safe diuretic that can be used to reduce edema and bloating. Two common components of PMS are a rich source of natural potassium. Dandelion greens are also an excellent source of vitamin A and C and contains an abundance of iron and calcium, both necessary for the bleeding woman. My favorite way to ingest dandelion greens is to simply eat them! Add a handful or so to your salads during the growing season and make a warm cup of tea from the dried leaves in the wintertime. Drink up to three cups a day.

Vitex (Vitex agnus castus) is one of the supreme female reproductive tonics. This herb works well in assisting the body in achieving hormonal balance. This is a great herb for treating irregular menstruation, PMS and menopause. Although it is contraindicated for women taking birth control, it is particularly helpful for those women coming off of the birth control pill and wanting to establish a regular cycle without the use of synthetic hormones. Many of the symptoms associated with PMS and menstrual irregularities can be associated with hormonal imbalance; it is here that vitex can be helpful in a plethora of situations including infertility. Vitex is a tonic and best to take upon first awakening. It is excellent herb for every stage of a woman’s life. Take three doses each morning for at least three months to a year. There are many other herbs that can be incorporated into your daily life that can assist in correcting even the most stubborn imbalances. Herbs work to support, strengthen, and nourish the body and can be excellent healing allies to all women. It is important to incorporate a healthy diet, exercise, and good rest into any healing regimen. For more information on herbal medicine, please contact your local herbalist.

Lupo Connell is a Clinical Herbalist, a Flower Essence Practitioner, and an Herbal Educator. She has been studying herbal medicine in Western North Carolina for the past ten years and enjoys teaching within the Asheville community. In August, she will be offering “Mountain Roots - An Intro to Herbalism” a series of 13 classes focusing on plant identification, medicine making and community wellness. For more information, please contact her at plantessence@aol.com.
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