

INTRODUCTION

Your body is not broken. It is speaking.

Irregular cycles, menstrual pain, intense premenstrual syndrome, difficulty conceiving, hormonal imbalance that blood tests cannot fully explain. Chinese medicine has spent two thousand years developing a system to read these signals and address them at their root.

Gynaecology in TCM is not a separate speciality. It is part of the same system that regulates sleep, digestion and the stress response. When the cycle changes, Chinese medicine looks for the underlying pattern, complementing conventional gynaecological follow-up.

This guide gives you a framework for understanding your hormonal health from a TCM perspective and the first steps you can take to support your balance. It does not replace consultation with your gynaecologist or doctor.

CHAPTER 1

The menstrual cycle through the lens of Chinese medicine.

For TCM, the menstrual cycle is one of the most sophisticated expressions of female health. It is not only a monthly event: it is a *mirror of the state of Qi, Blood, Yin and Yang* in the organism as a whole.

Menstrual phase (days 1-5): movement of Blood

In TCM, optimal menstruation is fluid, bright red, without large clots or significant pain. Intense pain, dark clots or irregular flow may indicate Blood or Qi stagnation, often related to stress, cold or deficiency.

Follicular phase (days 6-13): building Yin

After menstruation, the body builds the endometrium and matures the follicle. In TCM, this is the phase of Yin and Blood. Fatigue, scanty vaginal discharge or irritability in this phase may point to Yin or Blood deficiency.

Ovulation (around day 14): the transformation of Yin into Yang

Ovulation is the point of greatest vitality in the cycle. In TCM, it requires sufficient Kidney Jing. Absent cervical fluid, ovulation pain or late ovulation may indicate Yin deficiency or stagnant Qi.

Luteal phase (days 15-28): maintaining Yang

In the second half of the cycle, warm Yang nourishes the corpus luteum. Classic PMS, irritability, breast distension and mood changes may indicate Liver Qi stagnation or heat from Yin deficiency.

"Chinese medicine does not treat the menstrual cycle as a problem to be managed. It reads it."

CHAPTER 2

Common conditions and what TCM contributes.

These are the conditions most frequently addressed through Chinese medicine in the area of women's health, and how TCM understands them beyond conventional diagnosis. TCM always acts as a complementary therapy alongside medical follow-up.

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

TCM does not see PCOS as a single disease but as several possible patterns: Phlegm-dampness stagnation, Qi and Blood stagnation with heat, or Kidney Yang deficiency. The approach differs in each case. There is ongoing scientific research into the role of TCM in these conditions; some studies have observed possible benefits in cycle regularity and hormonal profile. Results are heterogeneous and should not be interpreted as a guarantee of outcome in any individual case.

Endometriosis and pelvic pain

Endometriosis corresponds in TCM to a pattern of deep Blood stagnation, often with cold and Liver Qi stagnation. The goal of treatment is to support the movement of Blood and uterine warmth as a complement to medical follow-up. Moxibustion plays an important role in this pattern.

Perimenopause and menopause

The menopausal transition in TCM is a process of rebalancing Yin and Yang as Kidney Jing naturally declines. Hot flushes, vaginal dryness, irritability and insomnia may correspond to the pattern of Kidney Yin deficiency with relative heat. Treatment supports the transition process as a complement to routine gynaecological follow-up.

PMS (premenstrual syndrome)

Classic PMS typically corresponds to Liver Qi stagnation. Stress is the main trigger. Treatment includes points that support the movement of Liver Qi and nourish Blood as support for emotional balance.

Fertility and IVF support

There is ongoing scientific research into the role of TCM in supporting fertility, both natural and assisted. Some studies have observed possible preparatory benefits; results are heterogeneous and should not be interpreted as a guarantee of outcome. Some meta-analyses have explored the role of acupuncture in supporting IVF cycles; the evidence is heterogeneous and research continues. The support protocol is designed individually for each case.

CHAPTER 3

7 women's health practices from a TCM perspective.

These recommendations are consistent with Chinese medicine principles and may have a positive impact on your cycle and hormonal wellbeing. They do not replace medical or gynaecological follow-up.

1. Protect uterine warmth.

TCM attributes a significant part of menstrual problems to cold. Avoid very cold drinks and foods during menstruation, keep the lower back and abdomen warm, and minimise exposure to cold in the days before and during your period.

2. Eat iron from animal sources in the post-menstrual phase.

Days 1-10 of the cycle are the critical window for rebuilding Blood in TCM. Quality red meat, mussels, lentils with vitamin C and dates are Blood-tonifying foods in this system.

3. Support the Liver to moderate PMS.

Stress stagnates Liver Qi, which may be the primary cause of PMS in TCM. Moderate exercise, especially gentle movement and stretching, supports the movement of Liver Qi. Mint, rosemary and onion are foods that support this movement.

4. Prioritise sleep in the luteal phase.

The second half of the cycle is the Yang phase, which requires warmth and rest to be maintained. Insomnia in the luteal phase may worsen premenstrual symptoms. Prioritising sleep before 11pm is a standard recommendation in this phase.

5. Reduce intense exercise during menstruation.

High-intensity exercise during menstruation may disperse Qi and aggravate pain. Walking, restorative yoga or simply resting are more appropriate options during this period.

6. Observe your cycle as a source of information.

The colour of the flow, the presence of clots, pain, cervical fluid and your emotional state in each phase are all valuable signals for the practitioner. Keeping a cycle diary for 2-3 months provides very precise information about your energetic pattern.

7. Manage stress especially around ovulation.

Acute stress at the time of ovulation may block or delay ovulation according to TCM (Qi stagnation). If you are trying to conceive, the days around ovulation deserve particular attention to stress management.

CHAPTER 4

When to seek specialist attention.

Chinese medicine can complement conventional treatment in all of these situations. It always acts alongside medical and gynaecological follow-up, not in place of it. If you recognise any of the following, consult your doctor and consider also a specialist TCM assessment:

- Your cycle is irregular or absent without a clearly identified cause
- You have menstrual pain that interferes with your daily or professional life
- You have been trying to conceive for more than 6 months without result
- You are preparing for or in the middle of an IVF or donor egg cycle
- Your doctor has diagnosed PCOS, endometriosis or diminished ovarian reserve
- You are in perimenopause and symptoms are affecting your quality of life
- Your hormone tests come back normal but your body says something does not fit

Chinese medicine does not replace gynaecological follow-up. It complements it with an additional level of detail and personalisation, always in coordination with the medical team.

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Salva Gianfreda · Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner · RMIT University Melbourne · PUNTOS de Salud · Palma de Mallorca