

Women's Moon Time:

an herbal journey into menstrual health



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Plants are strong medicine. Please use them with respect and awareness. The information contained herein is intended for educational purposes only and should not be used in place of diagnosis and treatment by a qualified healthcare practitioner.

Reclaiming Your Menstrual Experience: a history of blood

Rituals and Sacred Space

There are many ways to reclaim the sacredness of your menstrual cycle. There are no rules. Explore the traditions of different cultures around the world, see what it is that you can incorporate into your own life. But most importantly use your own intuition and heart. What feels nourishing, honoring, and good to you?

The following are a few ideas on how to create ritual and sacred space during your moon time:

Moon Tracking

Follow the moon. As humans we are all intimately connected to the cycle of the moon, but women are more so. Get a moon calendar and keep track of how your cycle flows with the cycle of the moon. Re-establish this ancient and physical connection.

Journaling

Many cultures around the world believe that women are more open, intuitive, creative, powerful and wise when we are bleeding. To honor this, keep a journal to write in during your moon time. It's a wonderful place to put so many of the emotions that can also arise during this time. Take special care to write what flows without judgment or constraint.

Bathing

Baths are a wonderful and simple ritual to honor yourself during this time. Create special moon time bath oils. Put herb sachets in the bath water. Burn candles and incense. When you are done, anoint yourself with rose oil or other feminine essential oils and herbs.

Art

Let your creativity flow as your blood flows. Even if you are not an artist, art is a wonderful healing and nourishing exercise and ritual. Paint, draw, sculpt, build – give yourself space to create, create, create.

Nature Meditation

Spend time with the earth, the great mother. Walk, hike, and meditate. Get to know a new plant in your garden. Sleep outside.

Singing

Sing to yourself, sing with others, sing outside to the trees, anywhere or however you wish! There are songs that have been passed down in many cultures that are particular for sacred times of bleeding, but really the act of singing with the conscious connection of honoring your blood is what is important.

Red Tent

In many cultures, menstruating women gather together to retreat and honor their menstruation in a women only space, a moon lodge or the red tent. Create a space to honor your womanhood and menstrual cycle. Invite other women to use it as well. If you live with other women and menstruate at the same time, take some time to honor yourself and each other together.

Sacred Space

Sacred space can be anywhere. Ultimately, creating a sacred space means taking time out (for however long...3 minutes or 3 days) to honor oneself, your allies and divine connection where you feel secure to consciously honor this sacred time.

Art of Doing Nothing

In our busy lifestyles, often the most difficult thing for us to do is nothing at all. Honor and nourish yourself by doing nothing. Take a day off. Don't exercise, cook, open mail, or answer the phone. Feel free to lounge and sleep.

Returning the Blood

Giving your blood back to the Earth is a conscious way of offering thanks to the macrocosmic mother as well as honoring your personal connection with your blood and the cycles of life. Ways of doing this may include watering your plants with moon blood from your washed pads or taking time to be outside and bleed.

Goddess Archetypes

Connecting with particular historical or personal female archetype can be a profound way to invite the divine feminine into your personal experience, empowering you to become aware and work with your own divinity.

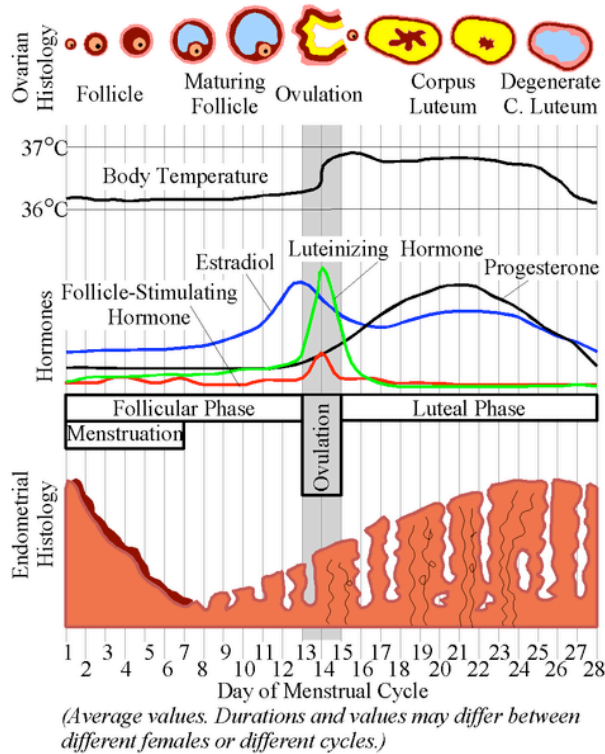
Rites of Passage Rituals

Celebrate your cycles and phases of your life as a woman. For many of us, our menarche (or first menstruation) passed in silence and even shame. Create rituals to honor your rites of passage as a woman – menarche, pregnancy, and menopause. Celebrate these times for the women in your life, you mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends. Rituals can be simple or elaborate. Retreat, throw a party, go out to dinner, treat yourself or the dear women in your life to a gift.

Menstruation: a practical look

The Biology Behind Menstruation

The menstrual cycle is beautifully complex. The following terms and definitions will help you to understand your moon cycle:



The menstrual cycle is divided into two phases:

Follicular phase – includes the time when menstruation occurs followed by the growth and thickening of the endometrium (uterine lining), which lasts between 10 – 14 days. Ovulation occurs, and a single egg is released into the fallopian tube. This is when conception is most likely.

Luteal phase - The corpus luteum (the remnant of the follicle where the ovum developed) begins to secrete progesterone and estrogen. The endometrium begins to grow glandular structures and blood vessels that are capable of nourishing a developing embryo. If fertilization does not occur the corpus luteum dies, leading to a decline in the levels of hormones. This in turn leads to the shedding of the endometrium that is dependant on these hormones for its development and health. Menstruation occurs.

<i>Ovum</i>	the egg produced by the ovary each menstrual cycle
<i>Follicle</i>	the structure in the ovary that can contain the ovum if development proceeds to ovulation.
<i>Corpus luteum</i>	the 'yellow body' that is the structure left after ovulation has occurred and which is responsible for the secretion of estrogen and progesterone.
<i>Follicle stimulating hormone (FSH)</i>	a pituitary gland hormone that stimulates the growth of follicles.
<i>Lutenizing Hormone (LH)</i>	the hormone produced by the pituitary gland that sustains the corpus luteum.
<i>Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH)</i>	a hormone secreted by the hypothalamus that initiates the release of LH and FSH from the pituitary gland.
<i>Endometrium</i>	the lining of the uterus that is shed each menstruation.

Tampon vs. Pads

Tampons

While convenient and comfortable, tampons hold many dangers. Most tampons on the market are made using a chlorine bleaching process that is dangerous for women and the environment. The vaginal lining is one of the most absorbent in the body. Bleach and other chemicals used during their manufacture are absorbed into the blood stream through the vaginal walls. It has been shown to lead to many problems from itching, chronic dryness, toxic shock syndrome, and septicemia. Tampon use has also been linked to the pooling of endometrial tissue in the body causing endometriosis. If you are going to use tampons make sure they are made from organic and bleach free cotton. Change them regularly and do not wear them overnight.

Pads

Again while pads are much safer for your body, it is important to be aware of the type of pads used. Avoid those made with chlorine bleach, fragrances, and other chemicals, which are also easily absorbed by your body. Purchase only organic, chlorine and fragrance free products.

Disposable vs. Re-usable

In a woman's lifetime, one is likely to use approximately 15,000 sanitary pads. Over 12 billion sanitary pads and tampons are used annually. An average woman will throw away 250-300 lbs of tampons, pads, and applicators during her life. Re-usable cloth pads are not only healthy for your body but easier on the environment as well. If you do not want to use re-usable pads please make sure the pads (and tampons) you purchase are biodegradable.

The Keeper

Made from gum rubber, this is a re-usable product with a curved cup and is inserted into the vagina, and holds or pools the menstrual blood until it is removed and emptied.

The Sponge

This product is made from naturally absorbent sea sponges that are inserted into the vagina. It should be removed and rinsed every 3 hours and may leak.

Resources:

Glad Rags - www.gladrags.com

Urban Armor (handmade) - www.bloodsisters.org and www.urbanarmor.org
(also carries sponges and the keeper)

Luna Pads - www.lunapads.com

The Keeper - www.keeper.com

Nutrition for a Healthy Cycle

Omega oils

Prostaglandins are local hormone-like substances involved in the regulation of ovulation, menstruation, labor, as well as other non-gynecological events. In general they help ensure the normal order and balance of your body's functions. When they are imbalanced this can lead to many common gynecological complaints. The Omega oils (3-6-9) are essential to the proper production and balance of prostaglandins in the body. Increased intake of omega oils has been shown to significantly improve heavy menstruation, painful menstruation, PMS, endometriosis, as well as breast cysts.

Common sources of high omega oils (especially Omega 3):

- Fish oils
- Flax seed oil
- Evening Primrose oil
- Sardines
- Wild fish (especially Salmon and Halibut)
- Wild or grass fed meats
- Pumpkin seeds

Magnesium

Magnesium is involved in at least three hundred different enzymes and body chemicals (Bergner, 1997). It plays a major role in the healthy function of our bones, heart, and muscles. Magnesium is the most common deficiency found in the US diet. Magnesium can significantly help many gynecological problems, including painful menstruation, PMS, benign breast disease, erratic bleeding, and endometriosis.

Some food sources of magnesium:

- Dark leafy greens
- Buckwheat flour
- Rye flour
- Almonds
- Kelp
- Halibut

Folic Acid

Folic Acid is a nutrient required in healthy cellular growth. The Pill affects folic acid absorption, along with many of the B vitamins and zinc, negatively. Deficiency in folic acid has been shown to lead to cervical dysplasia (abnormal pap smears) and an increase in susceptibility to cervicitis. If you are taking the Pill, it is important to also take a folic acid supplement and multivitamin. Since it is essential nutrient for cell growth, it is extremely important during pregnancy. As much as 60% of pregnant woman in the United States are deficient in folic acid.

Some food sources of folic acid:

Chicken liver
Brewer's yeast
Lentils
Dark leafy greens
Orange juice
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Bok choy
Leeks

Multivitamins

It is increasingly difficult to impossible to get all of our nutrients from our food alone. Many vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients play an important role in gynecological function and health. Many women find a significant improvement in their menstrual health simply by making dietary changes and taking a good quality multivitamin.

Nutritive Herbs

Many of the vitamins and minerals necessary for menstrual health are found abundantly in many nutritive herbs. Our bodies in this form more easily absorb nutrients as well. While powders can also be taken, teas/infusions are the most common and best way of taking these herbs.

Some nutritive herbs include:

Nettles
Red Clover
Raspberry Leaf
Alfalfa
Oat Straw

Food Allergies

Many have food allergies and are not aware of it. Dealing with a constant allergen can deplete your immune system and manifest in many ways in your body, including gynecological complaints. Common food allergens include dairy, wheat, soy, corn, and gluten.

Hormones in Food

In the food industry of today, as many of us are already aware, many of the meat and dairy products are full of hormones. Most of these hormones are estrogen or estrogen precursors due to the desire by farmers to produce mass product. In our bodies, as women these hormones can affect our cycle adversely in ways that can produce issues as intense as ovarian cysts, severe dysmenorrhea, fibrocystic breasts and even some types of cancerous tumors. Unless you eat a strict diet of only organic or local/rage raised animals it is important to be conscious of the risks and potential effects of hormones in or foods.

Thirteen Herbs for Thirteen Moons

Raspberry Leaf (Rubus idaeus)

Raspberry both relaxes and strengthens/tonifies the uterine and pelvic muscles. It is an excellent nourishing tonic high in many important vitamins and trace minerals especially important for women. It is particularly helpful for heavy bleeding and anemic conditions as well as dysmenorrhea when taken over time. Rubus also is known for promoting fertility and preparing the womb for childbirth and is safe to take throughout pregnancy. Combines well with Ladies Mantle, Rose and Yarrow for astringing bleeding; Nettles and Oatstraw for nutritive properties and during pregnancy; Vitex for hormone balance; Blessed thistle, Crampbark, Ginger, Peony or Dong Quai for painful periods.

Energetics:

Associated with the Great Mother Goddess Huitaca and the Queen of Wands in Tarot. Raspberry signifies a woman in full possession of her feminine powers...calm, grounded, intuitive, receptive, and playful. The flower essence good for a woman grieving the loss of a loved one energetically connected to her womb.

Dose:

1-3 cups of the infusion daily. Let steep in the water 4 hours up to overnight to get the important nutritive qualities of the herb.

Caution:

No known toxicity. In first trimester of pregnancy only use if recommended by midwife or qualified practitioner.

Lady's Mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris)

Alchemilla has a strong affinity to women and especially the female reproductive system. Its amphoteric action lends itself as an astringent for heavy bleeding but also a uterine stimulant and emmenagogue. Ladies mantle tends to do what is needed in the system and is hormone balancing. It helps reduce menstrual pains associated with heavy bleeding. Also promotes fertility especially after prior trauma by helping the normal involution of the uterus. Externally it can be used for vaginal irritations and infection and for toning the tissues of the breast. Combines well with Raspberry for fertility, prolapsed uterus and heavy periods; Vitex for balancing the hormones.

Energetics:

Associated with the Goddess archetypes Freya and The Virgin Mary. In Tarot symbolized by the Queen of Cups-A woman in command of her visions and dreams. Ruled by Venus Alchemilla is known as the alchemists flower. The flower essence is for women who wish to embrace the divine feminine and ones own feminine side.

Dose:

Hot Infusion: 1-2 cups

Tincture: 1 dropperful 2x day

Externally: Use tea infusion as douche or poultice for breasts

Caution:

Do not use during pregnancy

Rose (Rosa spp.)

The Queen of flowers, Rose is a heart tonic physically as well as energetically. An often-overlooked remedy, it helps calm the nerves, relieve depression, soothe irritability, grief and anger lending help to PMS and emotional issues surrounding menopause. It is an excellent decongestant and astringent for the female reproductive system, helping relieve painful/heavy periods due to congestion and regulating menstrual flow. It is cooling, clearing and anti-inflammatory and helps relieve problems associated with sluggish liver, including headaches. Rosa is also an invaluable fertility tonic especially when there are emotional issues or weak sexual desire. For PMS Rose combines well with Linden and Pulsatilla. For congestion and painful periods Calendula, Lady's Mantle and Red Clover are good allies.

Energetics:

The Queen of Flowers, emblem of Venus (also Chloris, Aphrodite, Mary and Dionysus) and symbol of love. Rose has been associated with many historical and mythological stories and archetypes for time immemorial. It helps one open to love, bring desires into action and heal the heart helping one bring joy and sensuality to life. How beautiful!

Dose:

In tea- 1 tbsp. per 1 cup infusion, drink 2-3x daily

Essential oil- use 3-5 drops per 1 ounce dilution (water, oil, salts) use as needed

Can also be taken as syrup, cordial, jelly or preserve as needed...Yummy!

Caution:

Due to the ridiculous over spraying of pesticides and herbicides on Roses, make sure to buy organic when using for consumption.

Cramp Bark/Black Haw (Viburnum opulus/prunifolium)

Viburnum is an anti-spasmodic, sedative, astringent. It acts as a uterine sedative and tonic and is true to its name as a smooth muscle anti-spasmodic amazing for relieving menstrual cramps, uterine pain, contractions, false labor pain and cramping in the back legs and bladder. Its astringency lends help to excessive blood loss in periods as well as bleeding associated with menopause. Viburnum is also a uterine tonic for childbirth especially with tendency towards miscarriage. Combine with Wild Yam for cramping and Valerian for uterine/ovarian pain with insomnia.

Energetics:

Associated with Ops, the Roman Goddess of fertility and plenty.

Dose:

1 cup decoction as needed for acute symptoms

1-2 droppersful tincture as needed

Caution:

Do not use during pregnancy, due to its stimulating action.

Ginger (Zingiber officinale)

Ginger is a warming, circulatory stimulant; expectorant, diaphoretic, carminative and rubefacient. It is stimulating as well as relaxing to the uterus, promotes menstruation, relieves period/ ovarian pain and warms sexual desire. As a circulatory stimulant it is excellent for cold, deficient and congested constitutions and menses that is scanty and clotty. It also has a marked effect on the digestive, respiratory and immune systems. Combine with Dong Quai to bring on menstruation and with Cramp Bark for dysmenorrhea.

Energetics:

Associated with Hestia, goddess of the hearth, home and kindling the eternal flame. In Tarot symbolized by the Eight of Pentacles which is about establishing strong foundations and roots, the archetype of the Craftswoman. The flower essence is warming and releasing-good for those who cut themselves off emotionally.

Dose:

Decoction- 1-3 cups day or as needed

Fresh Juice

Infused oil- rub on belly as needed for pain

Essential oil- 1-3 drops per 1 oz dilution applied externally

Caution:

DO NOT use during pregnancy or with blood thinning medication

Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*)

A “blood cleanser”, lymphatic, diuretic, relaxant, mild laxative, *Trifolium* has an affinity for women. It is very high in vitamin and mineral content and has estrogenic hormonal precursors. It’s deep cleansing action is especially helpful for chronic problems such as P.I.D. Red Clover also remedies painful, heavy periods that are congestive; vaginal infections, post-menopausal issues, stress headaches, hormonal skin problems (combine with Burdock) and muscle spasms. It also has beta-sterol constituents that have been studied for ovarian and breast cancer!

Energetics:

Associated with the Triple Goddess reflected in many cultures; Maiden, Mother and Crone. The flower physically resembles the opening of a woman’s vagina, mirroring the beauty of our own bodies reminding us of our inherent strength and power. The flower essence is about balancing, helping one remain centered, calm, clear and self-aware.

Dose:

Infusion 2-4 cups daily

Tincture 1-3 droppersful 2-3x daily

Caution:

NOT for use during pregnancy or when using blood thinning agents.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Calendula is anti-inflammatory, astringent, vulnerary, anti-fungal, cholagogue and emmenagogue. It regulates menstruation, reduces tension in uterine muscles and relieves cramps associated with congestion. The estrogenic effects help relieve menopausal symptoms as well as uterine and breast tissue congestion. It is specific for treating fibroids, cysts and fibrocystic breasts. It stimulates circulation, helps drain congested lymph, and is anti-viral/anti-microbial which can help control the herpes virus. It combines well with Red Clover for any congestive issues.

Energetics:

Associated with the Sun and the Womb; the source of creation. Evokes the Goddess archetype Isis, Egyptian Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mother of All, Goddess of 10,000 names.

Dose:

Infusion- 1-3 cups day

Tincture: 1-2 droppersful 1-2 x daily

The infused oil, E.O. and salve can be used externally

Caution:

DO NOT use during pregnancy.

Chasteberry (Vitex angustifolia)

A wonderful normalizing herb for the reproductive system, with a long history of use. It has a stimulating effect on the pituitary gland, which among other functions regulates and normalizes hormone production. It is useful for painful and/or irregular menstruation, infertility, PMS, menopausal problems, and other hormonal imbalances. It has been shown to be helpful for endometriosis. Its normalizing action means it is great for restoring the body's natural balance after taking the pill.

Energetics:

The great balancer, it can help to bring balance to your life- emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental.

Dose:

2-3 droppersful, 2-4 times a day.

Can be used for some acute conditions but works best when taken over a long period. For chronic problems it should be taken for one year or longer. Take for at least six months. Best taken at the beginning of the cycle (before ovulation).

Cautions:

Should not be taken during pregnancy unless under the supervision of a health care practitioner. Can interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills and other hormone treatment.

Don Quai (Angelica sinensis)

This wonderful herb is said to be one of the most widely used herbs in the world. And though it has many uses, it has become known as a female herb for its effectiveness in tonifying the uterus. Though it is gentler than its Western cousin Angelica, it is best used in combination with other herbs. It is useful for irregular and painful menstruation, especially those with scanty bleeding, PMS, and uterine fibroids. It can help infertility, especially if it is caused by lack of uterine tone. It is nourishing and tonifying to the blood and increases blood circulation to the pelvic area. Therefore, it is excellent for women who are anemic, weak, and postpartum use.

Energetics:

Helps to build creative energy and increase inspiration of new ideas and the energy to bring them to fruition. As its name suggests, species of Angelica are also often associated with angels and divine guidance. They are the messengers and guides.

Dose:

1-3 droppersful, 2-4 times a day. Discontinue use one week before period.

Cautions:

Do not take during pregnancy. Do not use if prone to heavy bleeding. Do not take if on blood thinning medication. Should not be used if you have endometriosis or uterine fibroids.

Licorice (Glycyrrhiza glabra)

Licorice has been used for centuries as a women's herb. It has estrogenic and other steroidal properties and is used to normalize and regulate hormone productions. It is especially helpful in treating adrenal exhaustion, infertility due to hormonal imbalance, and menopausal dysfunction. Works wonderfully in combination with other herbs for hormonal imbalances.

Energetics:

It is wonderfully grounding. It can help women who have a difficult time coming into their bodies because of past traumas. It opens up blockages in the emotional realm gently, allowing a greater peace to take its place. It can be very helpful in helping to nourish and "be sweet" to yourself when there is anger, heartache, and disappointment.

Dose:

1-2 droppersful, 2-4 times a day. Infusion – one teaspoon per cup of water.

Cautions:

Do not use for longer than six weeks. Do not use if you have high blood pressure, kidney or liver disease, heart disease.

Wild Yam (Dioscorea villosa)

Wild Yam has a long history of use by Native Americans, especially for use during childbirth. It has gained recent notoriety as a woman's herb for its use in natural progesterone creams. However, this is far from its traditional use. It is an autonomic nerve relaxant making it excellent for treating pain and spasms. It is most useful for PMS, mid-cycle spotting, painful menstruation, and endometriosis. Also effective for nausea and vomiting of pregnancy.

Energetics:

It can help reveal accumulated energy and creativity and bring it to the surface. It allows those whose protectiveness of their possessions keeps them from exploring new avenues to begin to allow their creativity to flow and to embrace change without fear.

Dose:

2-4 droppersful 2-4 times a day or as needed.

Cautions:

None known at this time.

Motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca)

Motherwort is a wonderful woman's herb that is not used as often as many other herbs. It is helpful in bringing on menstruation that is scanty or delayed, especially due to stress and anxiety. It strengthens and relaxes the uterine muscles and is wonderful from menstrual cramps, especially in combination with other herbs. It is also excellent in combination with other herbs for menopause, helping to support the body through this change.

Energetics:

Much like her name, Motherwort offers wonderful mother energy. It can help support you through difficult heartache and emotional times. Think of her anytime you feel like you need the embrace of mother's arms. *Leonurus cardiaca* means lion hearted and she can also offers courage to be our true selves and have a strong heart.

Dose:

1-2 droppersful, 2-4 times a day. Works best when taken over a long period of time.

Cautions:

Do not use during pregnancy. Avoid using for menstrual cramps if bleeding is heavy.

Blue and Black Cohosh (Caulophyllum thalictroides/Cimicifuga racemosa)

Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)

Long used by Native American women, blue cohosh is excellent for heavy achy spasmodic uterine pain. It is a wonderful uterine tonic and can help revitalize the uterine tissues after pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, and coming of the Pill. It is commonly used for uterine atrophy, menstrual pain, amenorrhea, and heavy menstruation. It has a long history of use for childbirth, easing false labor pains while strengthening and increasing the effectiveness of contractions during actual labor. Has been known to decrease the pain of childbirth and help alleviate postpartum contraction and pain. It is wonderful in combination with other herbs.

Energetics:

Similar to Black Cohosh.

Dose:

½ to 1 dropperful, 1-4 times a day.

Cautions:

Do not use during pregnancy, until the last month and then only under the supervision of a health care practitioner. Do not use if prone to heavy menstruation.

Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*)

Black Cohosh is another wonderful plant long used by the Native Americans and was introduced to the medical world in 1831. It is useful for menstrual cramps, amenorrhea, delayed menstruation, endometriosis, and menopausal complaints (as well as post hysterectomy). It restores tone to the uterus, especially atonic conditions causing irregular periods, usually caused by surgery, prolapsed uterus, or previous pregnancies and miscarriages. Works well in combination with other herbs.

Energetics:

It can help those that feel trapped and frustrated to be more relaxed and calm. Once they are no longer fighting their circumstances, clarity and peace are easier to perceive. "By releasing myself of the thoughts that bind me, I am open to the new concepts coming my way."

Dose:

1-2 droppersful, 1-4 times a day.

Cautions:

Do not use during pregnancy, except during the final trimester and only under the supervision of a health care practitioner.

***Severely threatened and near endangerment in the wild. Please use only cultivated plants.

Other Herbs for Women's Health

False Unicorn (Chamaelirium luteum)

False Unicorn contains steroidal like saponins, which are precursors to hormonal substances in the body. It is specific for uterine weakness and encouraging fertility as well as dysfunctions of the ovary and follicular formation hence making it invaluable for ovarian cysts. It also helps prevent threatened miscarriage and stops hemorrhage. Please note that Chamaelirium is a highly ENDANGERED SPECIES and substitutes should always be considered first and it should only be used for very specific conditions administered by a qualified herbalist. In fact it is nearly impossible to find on the shelf.

Blessed Thistle (Cnicus benedictus)

Relieves painful periods, menstrual headaches, heavy bleeding (esp., during menopause), as well as bring on suppressed periods. It also helps sluggish liver conditions, lethargy and irritability. Cnicus is an amazing plant that has had research done on its anti-neoplastic properties, which prevent abnormal cell growth, but due to its stimulating emmenagogue action it should NOT be used during pregnancy.

Peony (Peonia lactiflora; P. officinalis)

Peony is calming, anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmodic and a circulatory stimulant. In Chinese medicine it is used for "heat in the blood" and relieving absent or painful periods. It has long been known for any pain of the womb as it relieves stasis in the blood, helpful for childbirth, menstruation, varicose veins, hemorrhoids and poor circulation. Due to its stimulating effect Peonia should NOT be taken during pregnancy.

Mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris)

Mugwort is an excellent herb for childbirth. Teas and baths with mugwort can be very helpful during labor. Massage mugwort oil on your belly and back. It is also useful in combination with other herbs for amenorrhea.

Partridge Berry (Mitchella repens)

Long used by Native Americans, partridgeberry is a wonderful uterine tonic. It is helpful for any conditions associated with a congested and/or atonic uterus, including heavy menstruation, postpartum hemorrhage and infertility.

Vervain (Verbena officinalis)

Vervain is commonly used for tension and pain associated with menstrual pain. As an antidepressant, it can also be helpful for PMS and menstrual depression.

Valerian (Valeriana officinalis)

Valerian is an excellent antispasmodic and sedative, its extremely helpful for severe menstrual cramps that interrupt sleep. It can also be used in combination with other herbs to ease menstrual cramps with less sedative effect.

Burdock (Arctium lappa)

Burdock is an alterative, digestive and bitter aiding in the function of the liver, stomach and kidneys. For women it is a great ally for those dealing with liver congestion, skin problems, cystitis and eating disorders.

Yarrow (Achillea millefolium)

Yarrow is astringent, diuretic, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and diaphoretic. Achillea works on the blood and circulation. It staunches excessive bleeding, regulates menstrual flow, and clears toxins, heat and congestion as well as being an antiseptic for infections.

Dandelion (Taraxacum officinalis)

Dandelion is a general tonic with a high vitamin and mineral content specifically potassium. It is a powerful diuretic that works on the urinary system as well as being an aid for liver detoxification. For women it is great for liver congestive issues, chronic cystitis and kidney problems.

Shepard's Purse (Capsella bursa-pastoris)

Shepard's purse is specific for staunching excessive bleeding, hemorrhaging and spotting, Shepard's Purse is also a uterine stimulant and diuretic.

Lavender (Lavendula angustifolia)

Lavender is carminative, antispasmodic, antidepressant and a rubefacient. It is excellent for strengthening and toning the nervous system especially helpful for PMS, depression, menstrual and tension headaches, painful menstruation, irritability and stress.

Flower Essences and Essential Oils for Women

Flower Essences:

Peony

Has an affinity with the moon. Brings to light unconscious fears, disturbances and irrational fears. Ideal for emotional problems related with women's monthly cycles...PMS, depression, menopausal irritation, etc.

Ladies Mantle

Just like the Philosopher's Stone in alchemy, Alchemilla opens one to the eternal or the soul that can not be lost or dissolved. Excellent for women wishing to be in tune with one's own soul and the power of the divine feminine.

Alpine Lilly

Allows acceptance of all aspects of womanhood, physical, emotional and spiritual. For women who idealize femininity and can't come to terms with their physical female attributes and sexuality.

Pomegranate

For women who feel torn between being the provider and nurturer and living an independent lifestyle. Helps relieve conflict and enhance energy to support creativity on both sides.

Tiger Lily

Balances masculine and feminine energy. For women who feel they can't connect to the masculine side of themselves.

Calendula

“The flower of the sun”, Calendula enhances communication, warmth, receptivity and compassion. It enhances the feminine aspect of creativity and with the masculine aspect of dynamic activity.

Black Cohosh

For women who become caught in destructive cycles and relationships and are prone to dark, morbid thoughts. It helps transform these patterns into positive, fulfilling life cycles. Black cohosh is also helpful for physical reproductive illness that is related to negative emotional circumstances.

Rose

“The flower of love”, Rose opens the heart on all levels. Red Rose is specific for enhancing confidence in those that feel shame and timidity towards their body and sexuality. White Rose strengthens and renews joy in life. Wild Rose supports ones independence and sensuality while warming the heart and soften emotions.

Essential Oils:

Rose (<i>Rosa spp.</i>)	A universal female tonic and balancer, useful in all gynecological problems
Clary Sage (<i>Salvia sclarea</i>)	Depression, PMS, menopause, post-partum depression (avoid long term use if you have fibrocystic breast or uterine fibroids)
Marjoram (<i>Origanum marjorana</i>)	Antispasmodic, headache, menstrual cramps, constipation
Chamomile (<i>Matricaria recutita</i> and <i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>)	Anti-inflammatory, nervine, PMS, migraines
Lavender (<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>)	Overall equalizer, skin care, shock
Geranium (<i>Pelargonium graveolens</i>)	Hormone balancer, menopause, PMS, yeast
Tea Tree (<i>Melaleuca alternifolia</i>)	Anti-bacterial, herpes, yeast (the best remedy), cystitis
Bergamot (<i>Citrus bergamia</i>)	Antiseptic, water retention, yeast, depression
Neroli (<i>Citrus aurantium var. amara</i>)	Insomnia, depression, anxiety, stretch marks

From: Keville, Kathy and Green, Mindy (1995) *Aromatherapy: a complete guide to the healing art*, The Crossing Press, California.

Glossary of Terms

Adaptogen: assists in the body's ability to cope with stress, whether physical, mental, or emotional. Helps the body to maintain its proper balance.

Alterative: also known as blood and lymph cleansers. Enhances nutrition and repair to bodily tissues.

Amenorrhea: the absence of menstruation for six months or longer during menstrual years.

Analgesic: relieves pain

Anti-catarrhal: decreases the production of mucus from the mucous membranes. *Note: Mucus is necessary and important to the body and the immune system. It should not be stopped unless it is chronically in excess and the cause cannot be addressed. For colds and flu, it is better to thin the mucus than to stop it.*

Astringent: causes the contraction of tissues. Drying action.

Carminative: reduces and prevents gas

Cholagogue: stimulates bile flow from the gall bladder.

Diaphoretic: induces perspiration.

Diuretic: stimulates urination.

Dysmenorrhea: painful menstruation

Emetic: causes vomiting. *Anti-emetic* – stops nausea and vomiting

Emmenagogue: stimulates menstruation

Expectorant: causes the expulsion of mucus from the lungs. Two types: soothing and mucilaginous, and stimulating. Stimulating expectorants should always be taken with lots of water.

Hypotensive: lowers blood pressure

Hypoglycemic: lowers blood sugar

Immunomodulator: enhances the body's immune system.

Menorrhagia: excessively heavy bleeding during menstruation

Oligomenorrhea: scanty or infrequent menstruation

Rubefacient: increases circulation to the skin, usually localized.

Vulnerary: promotes healing of wounds or irritated tissues.

Recommended Reading

Trickey, Ruth (1998) *Women, Hormones, and the Menstrual Cycle*, Allen and Unwin Press, Australia

Northrup, Christiane (1994) *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, Bantam Books, New York

Soule, Deb (1995) *The Roots of Healing: A Woman's Book of Herbs*, Citadel Press, New York.

Berger, Judith (1998) *Herbal Rituals*, St. Martin's Griffin Press, New York.

McBride, Kami (2004) *105 Ways to Celebrate Menstruation*, Living Awareness Publications, San Francisco

Pope, Alexandra (2001) *The Wild Genie: the healing power of menstruation*, Sally Milner Publishing

Owen, Lara (1993) *Her Blood is Gold: Celebrating the Power of Menstruation*, HarperCollins, New York.

Grahn, Judy (1994) *Blood, Bread, and Roses: how menstruation created the world*, Beacon Press, New York.

Gladstar, Rosemary (1993) *Herbal Healing for Women*, Simon and Schuster, New York

McIntyre, Anne (1994) *The Complete Woman's Herbal*, Henry Holt Company, New York

Spider (1992) *Songs of Bleeding*, Black Thistle Press

Walker, Barbara J. (1983) *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, HarperCollins Publishing, San Francisco

Elias, Jason and Ketcham, Katherine (1995) *In the House of the Moon: reclaiming the feminine spirit of healing*, Warner Books, New York

Sjoo, Monica and Mor, Barbara (1975) *The Great Cosmic Mother: rediscovering the religion of the earth*, Harper and Row, San Francisco.

Anything by Aviva Romm