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## You Don't Need to Live with PMS

PMS, or premenstrual syndrome, has become an accepted yet unpleasant part of the female hormone experience, yet it doesn't have to be. Naturopathic Medicine addresses the imbalances in the body that lead to the symptoms of PMS, which can include mood changes, depression and anxiety, increases in appetite and cravings, bloating and weight gain, breast tenderness, back pain, headaches, cramps, and skin disorders such as acne. The contributing imbalances can include estrogen excess or progesterone deficiency, hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), vitamin B<sub>6</sub> deficiency, abnormal metabolism of prostaglandins (hormone-like substances), excessive fluid retention, and endorphin (a substance in the brain that provides pain relief) withdrawal. Conventional medicine treats PMS with artificial hormones in the form of birth control pills, which can lead to headaches, migraines, strokes, infertility and B vitamin deficiencies. Naturopathic medicine uses a gentle approach and natural treatments that don't harm the body and stimulate healing and balance.

Naturopathic treatment of PMS involves a thorough investigation into the root causes in each individual, using various methods of assessment including saliva hormone testing, blood tests, thyroid, liver and adrenal gland assessments, and physical exams. Once the body's imbalances are determined, a personalized treatment plan is created that is logical and sensible. Women who experience irritability, for example, may have slow liver detoxification, and will benefit from liver supporting treatments such as nutrients and herbs, and dietary suggestions like decreasing spicy and greasy foods. Nutritional support of estrogen in the first 14 days of the menstrual cycle and progesterone during days 15-28 can be as simple as adding ground flax (to support estrogen) and sunflower seeds (to support progesterone). Increasing vegetables and decreasing hormone containing animal products is also important, as well as including as many organic food sources to decrease the toxic burden on the body. A whole foods diet is always the foundation of any naturopathic treatment plan, and women experience great benefits from making healthy dietary changes, including reduced risk of diseases such as infertility, obesity and heart disease.

While treating the cause and prevention are the foundations of treatment plans, symptomatic relief is essential as well. Herbal medicines such as black cohosh, licorice, chaste tree berry are helpful at balancing hormones and relieving symptoms of PMS, but should not be taken without the prescription of a natural health specialist, as they do have potential interactions with other medications. Homeopathy is a gentle, effective form of medicine that can help to alleviate bloating, moodiness, forgetfulness and painful menses. Homeopathic remedies are prescribed based on the whole symptom picture and can be kept in a purse and used in place of Advil or Tylenol, with no risks or effects on the liver like the aforementioned medications (which in turn helps prevent future PMS symptoms).

For more information about the Naturopathic treatment of PMS, book a consultation with a naturopathic doctor. You don't need to live each month with unpleasant symptoms of PMS, you can increase your fabulous female potential by getting rid of PMS for good!