

[The Science of Ayurveda Looks at Menstruation](#)

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The Science of Ayurveda Looks at Menstruation

Seeking deeper Eastern insights on menstrual therapies, Hinduism Today interviewed two of America's foremost Ayurvedic experts. Ayurveda is the major traditional system of health in India, dealing with the body's ailments in a much different way than Western medicine. Their answers are a bit technical, but if understood may help women to understand what is happening with their bodies and thus cope intelligently with these natural forces. We spoke first with Dr. Deva Maharaji, Ph.D. He is a doctor of Ayurveda and Homeopathic Medicine and founder of the Deva Foundation, 565 East Channel Road, in Santa Monica, California, which specializes in counseling, self-healing and tantric research. We then spoke with Dr. Robert Svoboda who was filling in at Dr. Vasant Lad's Ayurvedic Institute in Sante Fe, New Mexico:

Dr. Maharaji: PMS is a big problem in the U.S. It is perfectly suited for treatment by Ayurveda since that science relates psychological and physical imbalances and consciousness. It is not pathological as Western [medicine] which deals with symptoms.

Basically, there are imbalance in the three doshas [movement, metabolism and structure]. There are several practical ways to regain natural balance. Herbs help. Herbs strengthen tissue, promote regularity. For example, tamarind can be taken against constipation in a chutney or tea - about 2 spoons a day. Gota kola tea (about 1/2-teaspoon) taken in the morning for 3-4 days will detoxify the lymphatic system. Lassi is good, add a little black pepper. Aloe vera tea can be taken in the morning for 1-2 days, with a little pepper again, to regulate body temperature and stabilize the cycle.

Diet is important, Stress should be on taking more yin (feminine) foods, and fewer yang items. So, more rice, less wheat, more yogurt/buttermilk, less milk, more melons and broccolli. People don't understand about milk. Used properly, adding a bit of dried ginger or cayenne, it will not cause mucous.

Yoga asanas can help to balance the solar and lunar forces, too, and thus reduce PMS symptoms. The cobra posture is good, so is alternate breathing. Remember that this all relates to the planets' forces. What is outside is inside. There are other means in Ayurveda, too, through use of metals. Yogananda practiced this. Copper helps control edginess, common during menstruation. There are tantric rings of 3 and 5 metals - gold, silver, copper, brass and iron - which control different things. Also stones - agates help receptivity.

Dr. Robert Svoboda: One reason that women live longer than men is that their blood gets purified each month. Ayurveda defines three waste products. Dietary wastes are removed through feces and urine, and fat is removed through sweat. Food is converted into seven bhatus or tissues through fire - first into blood and then six kinds of flesh. At each stage some wastes are generated through metabolism. Every month a woman body purifies the blood, adjusting for any imbalances...It is the apana vayu which controls the throwing out of these wastes. This is very beneficial and makes it easier for her to be physically healthy than for a man.

The monthly hormonal-emotional cycle involves all three doshas. Ideally, this was supposed to take place over the new moon time. Once her flow ends, fertility would peak around full moon. This was considered the ideal time to conceive - especially since the moon represents the mind. At that time, both male and female samskaras are optimal to pass on to a child.

As far as recommendations, we suggest women eat light, warm things with some fats. Asanas? They are designed to move the apana up in the body, which is basically the last thing you want to do during the period. Outer work is [traditionally] stopped, since the woman's real work was to purify herself during that time.