

DYSMENORRHEA (Painful Menstruation)

Dysmenorrhea is a condition characterized by severe pain before, during, or following menses and can include other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, bloating, diarrhea, headaches, fatigue, and weakness.

Although most women experience some pain during menstruation, “primary dysmenorrhea” becomes a problem when the pain is so severe it interferes with daily activities. “Secondary dysmenorrhea” describes the condition when it is the result of underlying conditions such as endometriosis, fibroids, cysts or pelvic inflammatory disease.

Conventional medicine uses procedures such as ultrasound, MRI and laparoscopy for diagnosis, and anti-inflammatory drugs and oral contraceptives for treatment. The treatment of secondary dysmenorrhea is dependent on the cause.

TCM Treatment of Dysmenorrhea

TCM has proven to be very effective in treating dysmenorrhea because of using pattern differentiation. For example, if a woman has been diagnosed with endometriosis by her OB-GYN and has menstrual pain, the pattern is “Tong Jing” or “painful periods”. However, if she has endometriosis without pain, but is having difficulty conceiving, the pattern is “Bu Yun” or “infertility”. The treatment is completely different for these conditions.

Although TCM does not actually recognize a condition called “endometriosis” (as that is a Western Medical term), many women have been cured with acupuncture and herbal medicine. This is because TCM treats the pattern of “Blood Stasis” and once the blood is circulating again, the tissue is nourished and the endometriosis is resolved.

Case Study

A 39 yr old teacher had been experiencing painful menstrual cycles her entire life. Two to three days prior to her cycle, she had a sticky yellowish vaginal discharge, and during her period she had lower back pain, was emotionally distraught, and had difficulty concentrating. Her breasts were sore, she had water retention, and her blood flow was dark and heavy with clots. She also had a sensation that something was stuck in her throat and was easily angered.

She was treated with acupuncture once per week for 6 months and was given a combination of Chinese herbal formulas. During her first cycle after the first 5 weeks of treatment, she reported an overall reduction in pain but was not symptom free. After another 5 weeks her periods were much better and her emotional symptoms virtually gone. After 6 months she rated her pain 1 out of 10.

Summary

Acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine have been used for thousands of years. Because TCM treats the root cause with pattern differentiation, dysmenorrhea has been successfully resolved and in many cases has been twice as effective as using conventional medicine.