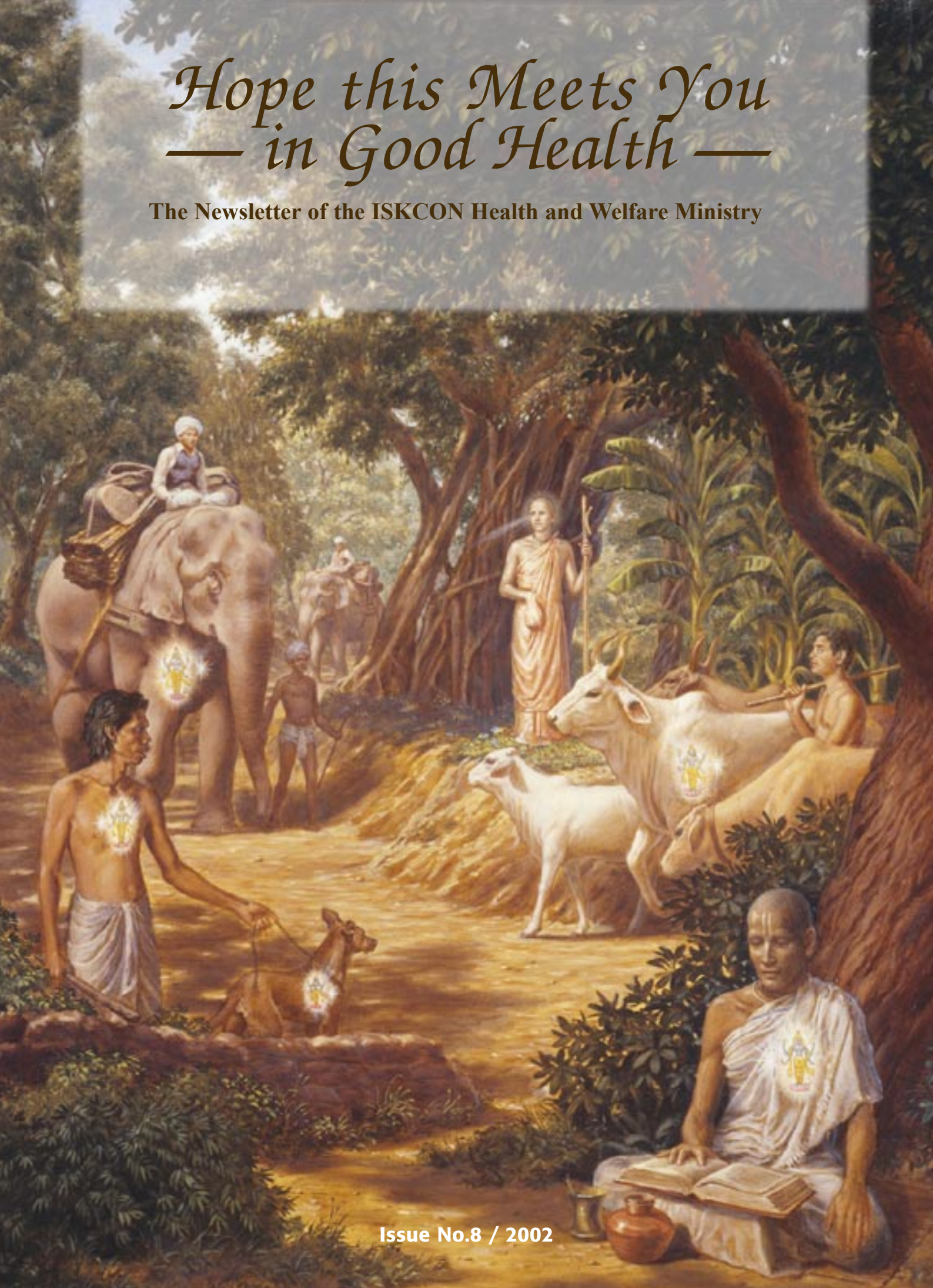


Hope this Meets You — in Good Health —

The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry



Message from the Minister

Last year the world was shocked by the attack on the World Trade Center. The compassionate nature of many people became evident by the sacrifices that were made to support the victims' families. However, it is also evident that no matter how much support or protection that people have within this material world, everyone must sooner or later succumb to death. The devotees of the Krishna consciousness movement are therefore doing the highest welfare work by saving people from the cycle of birth and death.

Whether or not the common man recognizes their sacrifices is not as important as the fact that Lord Krishna and His representatives are supremely pleased by such service rendered by devotees who introduce people to devotional service and the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. Those who assist the devotees in their service are also supremely blessed.

I would like to apologize for the late publication of this magazine.

— *Prahladananda Swami*

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— *in Good Health* —

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Issue No.8 / 2002

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Contributions are welcome for upcoming newsletters.

Disclaimer

- The articles in this magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the Health and Welfare ministry.
- This magazine is not intended to treat, diagnose or prescribe.
- The information contained herein is in no way to be considered as a substitute for consultation with a duly licensed health-care professional.

Quotes from the Previous Acaryas

Some quotes compiled by
**His Holiness Jayadvaita
Swami on Krishna con-
sciousness and welfare
work given by the previ-
ous acaryas.**

...

Spreading Krishna consciousness is itself the highest welfare activity

At the present moment groups of people are engaged in welfare activities in terms of society, community or nation. There is even an attempt in the form of the United Nations for world-help activity. But due to the shortcomings of limited national activities, such a general mass welfare program for the whole world is not practically possible. The Krishna consciousness movement, however, is so nice that it can render the highest benefit to the entire human race. Everyone can be attracted by this movement, and everyone can feel the result.

Therefore, Rupa Goswami and other learned scholars agree that a broad propaganda program for the Krishna consciousness movement of devotional service all over the world is the highest humanitarian welfare activity.
(*Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 1, Characteristics of Pure Devotional Service*)

Welfare activities cannot bring one Krishna consciousness

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura states that there are two types of karma-

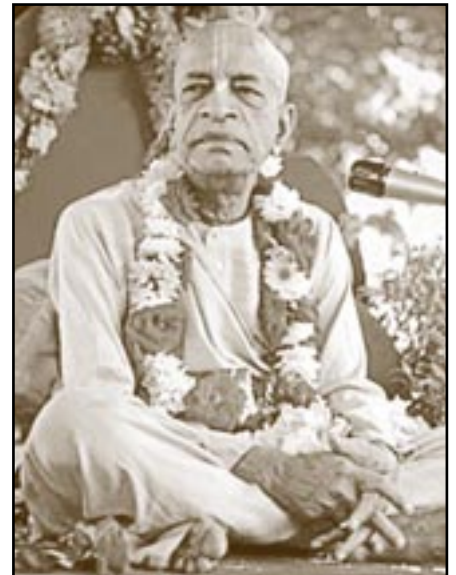
kanda activities—pious and impious. Pious activities are certainly better than impious activities, but even pious activities cannot help one achieve ecstatic love of God, Krishna. Pious and impious activities bring about material happiness and distress, but there is no possibility of one's becoming a pure devotee simply by acting piously or impiously.

Ordinary welfare activities

Therefore the sane man should utilize the little opportunity of human life in the cent percent Krishna consciousness. That is the proper utilization of life. Try to serve Krishna cent percent. Bas. That is proper utilization. The so-called philanthropy, altruism, humanitarianism, this ism, that.... Bogus.... Not bogus—useless. It will not help. They are pious activities. So, *Caitanya-caritamrita* says, pious or impious, both of them are impediments to Krishna consciousness. So we are not interested with pious activities or impious even. We are interested how to serve Krishna. Our philosophy is very difficult to understand. Suppose you are giving some medical relief, and if I say that “Why you should waste your time by giving medical relief? Why not give him relief from birth and death?” they’ll laugh. Is it not? They’ll laugh, that “What nonsense he’s speaking? This man is suffering. He immediately requires.” We don’t say that, “You don’t give medical relief,” but why do you forget the real business? That is our....

Mr. Asnani: He [Vivekananda] also said that you cannot teach the religion on empty stomachs.

Prabhupada: That is *his* philosophy. . . (Room conversation, Bombay, 8 Jan 1977)



They are nice activities only in the view of the material world

. . . any person who is very seriously engaged in his occupational duties in the *varnas* and *asramas*, and who does not develop love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vasudeva, should be understood to be simply spoiling his human form of life.

This is confirmed also in the Eleventh Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Eleventh Chapter, verse 32, in which the Lord says to Uddhava, “My dear Uddhava, any person who takes shelter of Me in complete surrender and follows My instructions, giving up all occupational duties, is to be considered the first-class man.”

In this statement of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it is understood that people who are generally attracted to philanthropic, ethical, moral, altruistic, political and social welfare activities may be considered nice men only in the calculation of the material world. From *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and other authentic Vedic scriptures we learn further that if a person simply acts in Krishna consciousness and discharges devotional service, he is considered to be far, far better situated than all of those persons engaged in philanthropic, ethical, moral, altruistic and social welfare activities.
(*Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 5, The Purity of Devotional Service*) ❀

Reaching^{the} Whole Person



Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

There are different definitions of compassion in this world, but all of them require self-sacrifice. When the twin World Trade Centers were hit by airplanes, we had the opportunity to see self-sacrifice played out on that stage.

New York firemen and police rescue workers rushed into the burning buildings to save any who had been trapped in them. These persons certainly did not consider their own safety in making the decision to help others, and many of them were killed as the buildings collapsed.

Was this mundane compassion? Devotees usually equate compassion with the act of saving others not from burning buildings but from the burning fire of *samsara*—repeated birth and death.

Certainly this is Srila Prabhupada's definition of compassion. Srila Prabhupada wanted us to teach Krishna consciousness to others so that they could become free from the burning heat of material existence and he wanted us to save ourselves through helping others.

This is why ISKCON devotees have

spent years trying to preach to the non-devotees. Often, however, we draw a blank as to how to express compassion toward the already converted. When an institution focuses on preaching, it naturally attracts members. Those members are human beings with minds and hearts and bodies to be cared for, and our relationships with them are not as simple as the chance encounters we have with people when we distribute books on the street or go about our other services in this world. Therefore, if we are to care for these people throughout their lives, we must find very human ways in which to respond to their very human needs, and we cannot consider those human ways mundane. Rather, we want to find the balance of sharing Krishna conscious support and education with physical and mental support.

Compassion toward the nondevotees is an important part of a Vaisnava's life. Even more important is compassion shown toward the devotees. Compassion is not an incidental quality in a Krishna conscious life but a

foundational willingness to sacrifice oneself to help others.

The price to attain this quality is high. We must be prepared to give up selfishness. We must renounce pride. When we hear about another's suffering, we actually have to put our own desires on hold and want to help. For a devotee, we want to help spiritually, because we understand that material aid has a limited effect, but we should also help materially if we are able.

We shouldn't feel that helping a devotee who has fallen ill in physical ways is mundane compassion or a sign that we have lost sight of the spiritual mission. Rather, if we should learn to marry the spiritual mission with care for the devotee's body and mind, others will learn to marry those two ideas too and become whole in their own expressions of Krishna consciousness.

ISKCON has been in the West now for thirty five years. Although we still have many young people, many devotees are beginning to age. Our institution must face this next challenge:

how to help the devotees who have given their lives to Srila Prabhupada's mission but who have fallen ill.

Our institution is maintaining its preaching front, but ultimately, our real preaching will be how we care for those who join us. That's what will separate lofty ideal from practical lifestyle in people's minds. How can we actually learn to care about one another?

To answer that, we must look at the corollaries of Vaisnava compassion: humility and kindness. If we lack humility, we will tend to be presumptuous about our application of compassion. That is, we will presume we are helping more than we actually are.

We will also tend to presume that we have achieved a depth of spiritual compassion we have not attained and that we have somehow become above reaching out to help in apparently ordinary ways. Our sympathy rarely runs as deeply as we wish it would, and our motivation to be kind is often somewhat superficial.

If we lack humility, we often help with an air of superiority: "At least this isn't happening to me!" That reduces our ability to care. Therefore, the cultivation of humility is essential to the ability to practice true compassion.

If we lack humility, we usually also lack the ability to be consistently kind. As we strive to reach the ideal without the benefit of humility, we often bypass the very human expressions of kindness and consideration that are the qualities of the compassionate heart.

Devotees have even been afraid that too many acts of kindness and consideration are signs of mundane compassion and prove that we don't know that the body and soul are different. Caring for the body—ours or someone else's—we think, forces us to focus on the body as if it were important; but we're not the body! Why give it any energy or care? This lack of balance is a mistake in spiritual life.

Aside from the mistake of living in an imbalanced way, we commit the mistake of pride. That is, we act

beyond our actual realization. We so carefully examine our motives and try to come out acting on the spiritual plane that we act beyond our understanding and give up common courtesy.

How many of us have felt that our needs or desires are more important than the needs or desires of others simply because we are devotees? How many of us have even felt that in relation to other devotees?

If we are to find both balance and humility, we must act on behalf of the great compassionate worker, Srila Prabhupada, and care for his followers as well as preach to the nondevotees. Caring for others and ourselves can take us a long way toward breaking through any hardness of heart.

In a sense, caring for the nondevotees is easy and non-entangling; caring for those who have joined us with all their physical and mental aches and pains is more taxing. If we care for them despite the difficulties, sacrificing ourselves to give them both spiritual and material support, our sense of spiritual compassion will not remain theoretical but move into the realm of practical realization.

As we cultivate humility and self-awareness, we will see our own flaws and difficulties, and this will help us to understand what others are feeling. We will feel our own vulnerability and then feel kind toward it when we see it in others.

Often we will also find that showing compassion in physical ways allows us to feel the necessary empathy toward another that allows us to provide Krishna conscious help as well. Giving someone else Krishna consciousness, whether devotee or non-devotee, is a sublime act.

To give Krishna consciousness is far above any physical help we can offer, but when we lack deep spiritual realization, our act of offering Krishna consciousness can become mechanical. We can simply preach to others because our spiritual master said we should, making our compassionate expressions inferior and presumptuous.

As devotees, we should strive to give the one before the zeros without ignoring the importance of the zeros to others. That combination is our goal.

A truly caring devotee who wants to help others doesn't see their needs as wholly material, but uses those needs to deliver the highest thing. Without the willingness to face others as complete human beings, how will we ever know them enough to convey the ultimate gift of Krishna consciousness?

Therefore, we should give attention to the whole person and not fanatically concentrate only on the soul, hammering away at the philosophy or trying to manipulate someone into doing "what is best for them."

If someone actually needs help to start their car, we should care enough to help. If a mother is struggling with her children, we should care enough to help. At the same time, we should not act in a way that diminishes anyone's Krishna consciousness or allows them to relax their spiritual focus.

That is the balance we are seeking. Krishna has provided us with many opportunities to practice kindness and consideration as well as to cultivate humility and a deeper Krishna consciousness. Almost all those opportunities exist in our freedom to serve our god brothers and god sisters.

By helping them in their ordinary lives without losing sight of the spiritual goal, we become eligible to learn to express the deepest forms of compassion. We should therefore learn not to ignore the wholeness of another person even while considering his or her ultimate wellbeing.

To ignore others' needs in the name of offering only spiritual compassion means to live in denial about our own humanness. As the president of the Institute for American Values said regarding the New York Firefighters who risked and lost their lives to save people during the World Trade Centre disaster, "You know, what these guys do, there's no moral ambiguity to it. They just go in and get the innocent people." ❀

Herbal Help

by Raga Manjari and Rama Prasad

Below is a list of medicinal herbs in alphabetical order, as well as suggestions of how herbs can help overcome some physical problems

Aloe Vera

Believed to be a gift from the goddess Venus, aloe vera has been used as a cure all for conditions ranging from the healing of wounds to the proper digestion of food.



Aloe vera (kumari) expels toxins. It is a cold, bitter, sweet, tonic with nourishing and rejuvenating properties. It strengthens vision, enhances fertility, eliminates poisons and balances vata.

Description: A perennial, succulent plant that grows low to the ground. It has narrow, tapering, thorn edged, fleshy leaves that contain a gelatinous juice. The color of the leaves varies from gray to dark green with some varieties featuring light green leaves with horizontal markings. Each leaf grows between 1 – 2 feet (30 – 60 cm) long and is arranged in a circular fashion around a fibrous root. The plant produces tube-shaped flowers that are yellow, red or purple in color. The plant grows easily in most areas of India and other parts of the world.

History: Known as the “Plant of Immortality” by the ancient Egyptians and the “Universal Panacea” by the ancient Greeks, the aloe vera plant has been used internally as a digestive aid, externally for burns, and as a soothing lotion for the skin. The Sanskrit name “kumari” means “virgin girl” which alludes to the regenerative power of aloe vera with respect to the female reproductive system. Its ability to survive in tropical and difficult conditions with little water has given it a metaphysical connotation of bringing success in the face of adversity.

Modern uses: If taken internally, its juice cleanses the blood, liver and reproductive system. This cleansing action is particularly effective for relieving *pitta* conditions such as rashes, acne, liver disorders, menopausal flushes and painful periods. Externally, aloe vera is also effective for vaginal herpes, burns, sunspots, fungal infections and eczema. Applied to the nails it acts as an effective nail-biting deterrent.

Available forms: Aloe vera juice is widely available from health food stores. Avoid juices preserved with ascorbic or citric acid as they are heating and counter aloe vera’s cooling effect. Gel and cream for external use can be easily obtained but avoid those with lanolin as it is also heating. Capsules of concentrated powder are also sold at health food stores. Follow the recommended dose as excessive quantities may cause cramps and diarrhea. An

aloe-based Ayurvedic wine—called *kumar-yasavan*—is used for female reproductive imbalances and liver conditions.

Home remedies: For wounds, apply 1/2 teaspoon aloe vera gel with 1/2 tsp comfrey cream, 1/5 tsp ghee and 1/5 teaspoon turmeric. When burns are very sensitive or deep, it is easier to make the following mixture in an atomizer:

- Mix with 50 ml warm water 2 tsp pure aloe vera gel and 1/3 tsp turmeric.
- Shake well then add 1 teaspoon pure honey.
- Cool in fridge before spraying on the affected area twice daily.

If you suffer from inflamed eyelids, apply a mixture of 1/2 teaspoon of aloe gel and 1/3 teaspoon rose water.

Caution: externally aloe vera juice can cause allergic dermatitis in those with very sensitive skin.

Brahmi

Bacopa monnieri; *Sanskrit:* brahmi, sarasvati; *Family:* Scrophulariaceae.

With a name meaning “divine creative energy,” brahmi is used to stimulate the brain and improve a person’s memory and ability to learn. It also helps relieve stress and is an excellent hair tonic.

Description: Brahmi is a creeping plant that spreads on the ground in marshy areas, forming into mats. The herb has dark green succulent leaves that are

rounded, relatively thick and are spatula or wedge-shaped. The leaves are connected to the stem by light green succulent branches. Its flowers are small and are either blue or whitish in color. Brahmi grows in the Himalayas near fresh or brackish water or marshy areas.

History: The herb's connection with learning and clarity of purpose is well established. Its Sanskrit name *saraswati* refers to the goddess Saraswati, the epitome of supreme wisdom and learning. Since the plant helps the mind to focus, *yogis* and others practicing meditation have taken Brahmi to enhance their spiritual focus.

Modern uses: Brahmi is Ayurveda's best brain rejuvenator. Recent research has established its efficacy in restoring memory, improving concentration and repairing the brain's neural pathways. As such, brahmi is an invaluable herb for brain injuries, alzheimer's disease, strokes, nervous breakdowns, epilepsy and simple "brain fog". Whereas many mental stimulants produce hyperactivity, brahmi is relaxing. It also increases one's resilience to stress and trauma.

Brahmi hair oil has been used for millennia as an effective remedy for insomnia, psoriasis, fever and hair loss. Though not its primary use, brahmi is also combined with other herbs for rheumatism and asthma.

Other names: Thyme leaved gratiola, water hyssop, Indian penny wort.

Available forms: Many traditional Ayurvedic brahmi preparations are in a ghee medium. One of these preparations is called brahmi ghritham. Brahmi tablets or fluid extracts are available through health food stores, the internet and direct marketing companies. Pure brahmi powder is sold at Ayurvedic clinics.

Home remedies: To improve your concentration and to prevent gray hair, you can make a simplified version of the traditional oil—*brahmi thailam*—at home by heating 200 ml of sesame oil and 100 ml of coconut oil and adding to it 1/2 a cup of fresh whole brahmi plant, 1 table-

spoon ground fresh gooseberries, 1 tbs licorice roots and a 25 gm piece of sandalwood (this can be substituted by 10 drops of pure sandalwood essential oil which can be added at the end). Bring everything to the boil and then simmer for 20-30 minutes. Strain and cool before storing in a dark glass bottle. Apply this slightly warmed oil to the scalp leaving it on for 30 minutes daily.

Caution: If you have high blood pressure, only take brahmi under medical supervision.

Shatavari

Asparagus racemosus; women's treasure; *Sanskrit*: shatavari; *Family*: Liliaceae.

Shatavari is renowned as an excellent rejuvenating tonic for women and as a brain tonic to prevent fatigue.



Shatavari is cooling, bitter and sweet in taste. Excellent in healing vata and pitta disorders of the blood. One of the best tonics for female fertility and a powerful rejuvenator, it improves the memory and brain function.

Description: Shatavari is a climbing plant with many branches. It has a tuberous root, small leaves, white flowers and berries that are dark purple when ripe. The roots are 12 – 36 inches (.03 – 1 m) in length. The roots are used for medicinal purposes. The plant is grown and cultivated throughout India, growing even at altitudes of 1,400 m above sea level.

History: Known as "a woman with a

hundred husbands," shatavari has been traditionally used in Ayurvedic medicine as a fertility tonic for women. The herb was renowned for increasing libido and for treating impotence and frigidity. In China, wild asparagus root (*Asparagus lucidus*) would be chewed to help alleviate symptoms of infertility.

The Chinese believed that the root was capable of promoting compassion and an openness to feeling truly loved.

Modern uses: As the reigning queen of female reproductive tonics. A strongly alkalizing and demulcent herb, shatavari is very soothing for acidic or inflamed mucous membranes that accompany sore throats, urinary tract infections, ulcers, bronchitis and kidney infections. Shatavari's ability to increase milk, semen and ovum production is indicative of its hormone promoting capacity. As such, it is Ayurveda's primary fertility tonic.

Shatavari's *pitta*-balancing affect can be applied to treat menopausal hot flashes and vaginal dryness. Research suggests it may play a future role in the treatment of serious disorders including malignant tumors, lung abscesses and tuberculosis.

Available forms: Shatavari is often prescribed in the form of a powder, ghee or jam. The plant is hardy and easy to grow in warm climates. Traditional Ayurvedic formulations include *shatavari gulam* (a female reproductive jam) and *shatavari mandura* (a combination of shatavari and dairy products for painful periods and infant colic).

Home remedies: To enhance the function of the female reproductive system, especially in the treatment of menstrual irregularity and infertility or to regularize the reproductive system after a miscarriage, take 1 tsp of shatavari powder in 1 cup warm un-homogenized milk before bed. For irritable bowel syndrome combine 1 part shatavari powder, 2 parts arrow root powder plus 2 parts musta (*Cyperus rotundus*—nut grass) powder. Take 3/4 tsp of this compound in 1/2 cup of warm water three times daily between meals. ♣

Medical Problems & how Herbs can Help



Chronic Fatigue

Since chronic fatigue constitutes a constellation of non-specific symptoms, treatment varies greatly from patient to patient. Chronic fatigue is much more than feeling fatigued—it generally involves chronic pain, loss of mental capacities, deep depression and digestive disturbances. From an Ayurvedic perspective chronic fatigue is due to depleted *ojas*, the immunity and vitality that arises from a balanced body and mind.

The body is depleted because it is busy fighting an internal battle against undigested mental or physical toxins or unresolved infections. Without the energy reserves to expend on otherwise normal physiological or mental processes, a chronic fatigue sufferer is unable to cope with everyday challenges. As chronic fatigue is commonly related to a *vata* or *kapha* imbalance general advice for balancing these is relevant. Initially a special diet and herbs are prescribed to purify the organs and channels. Purificatory practices known as *panchakarma*, involving treatments such as enemas or medicated vomiting may be appropriate also. This is followed by herbs,

gentle exercise and meditation to rekindle the digestion, immunity and to nurture a positive attitude. To integrate this new healthy pattern into the mind/body, rejuvenating body therapies using herbalized oils along with internal tonifying herbs are considered the icing on the cake. The mistake some natural therapists make is that they try to build up the body's strength and immunity without eliminating the underlying hotbed of *ama*. This may give short-term relief, but inevitably fails as the toxins gradually wear down the body again.

Lifestyle changes

Ayurveda talks about disease resulting from the overuse, under-use or misuse of the body. This is particularly evident in chronic fatigue syndrome. Elite athletes, workaholics and perfectionists have a higher incidence of chronic fatigue syndrome due to the syndrome of overuse (*ati-yoga*). Without sufficient recuperation the mind/body goes on strike, unable to function even at a minimal level. To reinstate equilibrium the pendulum may have to swing to a phase of inactivity for a short time. By exploring new avenues for developing creativity, relationships, an inner serenity the condition can

become a blessing in disguise. It is also a time to be gentle and nurturing to the body rather than a thankless taskmaster. Self-massage, *yoga-nidra* relaxation, meditation, cooking wholesome meals, connecting with nature, and enjoyable exercise or hobbies can all prove helpful. The diet should be as pure and light to digest as possible. Vegetable juices, steamed vegetables, soups, casseroles, digestive spices and whole grains suited to the body type are supportive to the cleansing and reparative process. Eliminate chemicals from the home and workplace and choose organic, chemical-free foods, drinks, cleaning agents and paints.

Case study

Gretchen was a *vata* constitution mother of two. She was also a nurse and a marathon runner. Gretchen contracted glandular fever, yet continued her busy schedule until she finally broke down. Aching all over, feverish and bedridden for months Gretchen felt her old active life slipping away. In a desperate effort for self-preservation the body had enforced minimal activity. Gretchen was advised to undergo a purificatory and strengthening *panchakarma* regime. In conjunction with daily massage and oil therapies she was administered cleansing anti-viral herbs such as cat's claw, long pepper, *Solanum santocarpum*, *guduchi* and *echinacea*. A series of herbalized oil enemas followed by digestive herbs were then given. Gentle yoga, Qi-gong and walking were practiced daily. She strictly adhered to the nutrition plan of fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, digestive spices and culinary herbs while avoiding processed or preserved foods.

After Gretchen's digestion returned to normal, the fever went and her strength increased Gretchen was prescribed adrenal tonic herbs including *withania*, *licorice* and *brahmi*. After 5 months on treatment Gretchen was able to return to

life at a more modified, relaxed pace. To keep her immune system strong she now takes chyavanaprash jam daily.

Depression

It has been said that an unexamined life is not worth living. Though a serious and debilitating condition, the underlying value of depression is that it offers space for existential enquiry. It gives time to process and reflect on the past and integrate it into the present in a way, which will enrich the future. Whether the depression is reactive (due to circumstances or events) or endogenous (as a result of internal biochemistry) the best approach is to strengthen the mind. This can be done through herbs and behavioral psychotherapy. Ayurveda often employs rejuvenating herbs such as ashwagandha, shatavari, holy basil, saffron and brahmi. These are often supplemented with tailored meditation practice and body therapies such as shirodhara to balance pituitary gland function. Stimulating music, colors and gems are also effective mood elevators.

Lifestyle changes

To shift depression a shift in attitude is often required. One way to train the mind to cultivate a positive and optimistic outlook is to keep a daily diary of the blessings experienced throughout the day. This takes the focus off negativities and onto everyday blessings that can be easily taken for granted. Setting small goals and achieving them helps one to gain the momentum and enthusiasm needed to move from the stagnant, introspective gear of depression. Often depressed people are simply unimpressed with life. Inspirational reading, counseling and taking up a fun hobby can help one to regain one's enthusiasm. Exercise is particularly effective as it triggers the release of the natural pleasure chemicals—endorphins. Sufficient exposure to sunlight is essential to eliminate the possibility of depression induced by SAD (seasonal affective disorder). Substances that can aggravate depression include caffeine, alcohol, marijuana and nicotine.

Case study

Evan was a 40-year-old, who had suffered depression for sporadic periods throughout his life. Though he had felt an underlying pessimism about life this was further reinforced when he lost his job. Evan was given a series of energizing yoga exercises called the Five Tibetans and asked to walk in nature for 30 minutes daily while listening to a compilation tape of his favorite music. To support his adrenal and brain function he was given a herbal jam called ashwagandadi lehyam and a series of shirodhara treatments. Psychotherapy sessions gave Evan a renewed sense of his career options, which led him to pursue his teenage dream of joining a jazz band. On the rare occasions when the blues progressed to the black cloud of depression Evan found group meditation sessions lifted him out of the slump.

Indigestion

Almost everyone suffers from various degrees of indigestion over a lifetime. Overeating, eating incompatible foods, eating at the wrong time or in a stressed state can all contribute to indigestion. As with all conditions, the disease symptoms vary according to the *dosha* involved.

Vata indigestion often manifests as excessive gas, alternating diarrhea and constipation, grey toxins on the tongue, an irregular appetite and craving for stimulants such as sugar and caffeine.



Pitta indigestion generally involves burning acidity or reflux in the stomach, an insatiable appetite, a tendency to diarrhea and yellow toxins on the tongue.

Kapha indigestion presents with extreme heaviness in the stomach or esophagus, lack of appetite, fatty stools and lethargy after meals, weight gain and a whitish tongue coating. A simple indigestion remedy for all body-types is a slice of ginger, a pinch of rock salt, a pinch of long pepper (optional) with a squeeze of lime-juice on top. Chew this 5-10 minutes before a meal to stoke up the digestive fire for complete digestion.

Vata indigestion is aided by warming carminative herbs such as asafetida, garlic, ginger, long pepper, ajawan seeds, cinnamon, nutmeg and bay leaves.

Pitta indigestion requires cooling carminatives and bitter tonics such as coriander, cumin, fennel, peppermint, nut grass, licorice, gentian, brahmi, shatavari, arrowroot, bala, gooseberry and slippery elm.

Kapha indigestion benefits from stimulating and warming herbs including ginger, garlic, pepper, long pepper, Indian myrrh, turmeric, cayenne, paprika, green chilies, mustard seeds and fenugreek.

Lifestyle changes

Ayurveda expands on the saying “We are what we eat” by adding that we are





when, why, where and how we eat. Though indigestion is sometimes due to hereditary organ weaknesses it is generally self-inflicted and perpetuated by poor eating habits. To optimize digestion try the following tips. Eat meals at around the same time daily, though only eat if hungry. Avoid eating at least two hours prior to sleep and one hour prior to exercise. Minimize talking and especially emotional discussions during meals. Don't drink cold water directly before, with or after meals. Chew each mouthful at least 15 times. Sip warm ginger tea with meal. Eat according to your body-type whilst observing the way you feel after various foods. Try to take fresh food rather than leftovers. If you are overeating think about what you are really hungry for. If you are under-eating try to inject some variety and tantalizing flavors into your diet. Enjoy a warm peppermint, fennel or cumin and coriander seed tea 30 minutes after a meal.

Case study

Benjamin was a *vata-pitta* constitution with chronic flatulence and stomach ache. At 25 years he had recently taken a course of antibiotics for a stomach ache but it only got worse. He started to improve as soon as he was put on a *vata* balancing diet and a herbal combination with asafetida, long pepper, fennel and ginger. Benjamin also started to eat with minimal conversation and in a relaxed, slow manner. He took a light protein-free dinner before 6.30 PM. Taking a room

temperature *lassi* (water, yoghurt and cumin powder drink) after meals helped to re-establish healthy gastro-intestinal flora. Before bed Ben took 2 tsp of castor oil and ginger juice for one week to alleviate excess air and ether in the intestines.

Insomnia

Sleep is a sanctuary where the mind and body can regenerate after the wear and tear of the day. Sleeplessness or poor quality sleep affects every aspect of one's life. Generally as a result of *vata* or *pitta* imbalance, long term sleep deprivation leads to body-ache, premature aging, emotional instability, memory loss, fatigue, poor coordination, confusion, and apathy. Sleep deprived people are a danger to themselves and others, especially in situations such as driving and operating machinery. Ayurveda uses general nervous system tonics to ground and relax *vata* type insomniacs. Useful herbs include nutmeg with warm milk, ashwagandha, valerian root, hops, skullcap, passion flower, kava kava, holy basil, Indian myrrh, lady's slipper, Indian frankincense. *Pitta* type insomnia, which presents with more body heat and mental agitation is treated with cooling nervines such as chamomile, gotu cola, sandalwood, hypericum, vervain and poppy seeds. Ayurvedic body therapies for insomnia include shirodhara with buffalo's milk plus gooseberry and a crown *chakra* bath called shiro-vasti.

Lifestyle changes

Visiting a sleep lab for assessment can sometimes accurately pinpoint the problem. Common stimulants that may disturb sleep are to be avoided. These include caffeine, sugar, nicotine, chocolate, coca-cola, salt, amphetamine drugs, alcohol and high tyramine foods such as smoked meats, spinach, eggplant, wine and cheese.

Foods high in tryptophan help to produce the serotonin, which induces sleep. Vitamin B and C are essential for this conversion. Tryptophan containing foods include milk, potatoes with skin, sunflower seeds, tomatoes, roasted pumpkin

and turnips. Deficiencies in manganese, potassium, calcium, zinc and iron can cause restlessness. Ayurveda uses mineral *bhasmas* to restore these. Try to wind down in the evening by engaging in a relaxing hobby rather than working, discussing heavy topics or doing strenuous exercise. Exercise during the day however can promote the body's willingness to rest. A light dinner at least two hours before bed will minimize indigestion-related insomnia. Applying *brahmi* oil on the head and warm sesame oil on the feet can sedate the nervous system. Also try a warm bath with sedative essential oils suited to your *dosha* such as lavender, chamomile, ylang-ylang, clary sage, frankincense, rose otto or vetiver. Daily meditation or *yogic brahmari* breath before bed can help to quiet an overactive mind, often an underlying cause of insomnia. If you can't sleep it is still important to rest the body by doing a guided relaxation or listening to soothing music. Try to make the bedroom quiet, dark and comfortable with the head of the bed facing any direction except north and away from power points. Make realistic expectations of the day otherwise you can feel restless due to incomplete tasks.

Case study

Simon was a 30-year-old *vata* constitution who suffered from insomnia since he was 16. His constant fatigue and apathetic attitude turned simple tasks into a huge effort. Simon revealed that he was extremely stressed since breaking up with his girlfriend as a teenager. His sleep patterns were further disturbed by years of playing music all night. Simon was given a series of shirodhara treatments where warm herbalised oil was poured over his forehead. This balances the pituitary gland function, which in turn reduces stress and promotes serotonin production. He was also given a tonic of ghee and ashwagandha called *ashwagandadhi lehyam* to fortify his adrenals and nervous system. Following a regime of daily yoga, self-massage, swimming and meditation as well as going to bed at the same time daily helped to balance his biorhythms. ♣

Ayurvedic Retreats Update

Before booking a reservation we strongly recommend that you contact the head physician and manager to make sure your expectations are going to be met especially regarding food, accommodation, treatments, consultations, counseling, climate, local festivals and precautions. Also if you have any health problems, give the organizers all the necessary information so that they can be prepared. Many Ayurvedic centers have access to modern, homeopathic, naturopathic, yogic and reiki treatments.

INDIA

Poonthottam Ayurvedic Hospital

Kulakkad, Cherpalchery, Palakkad, Kerala.

0091-492-661576

ayurveda@md3.vsnl.net.in

Cost: Around US\$30 a night.

Nearest airports: Cochin, Calicut, Trivandrum.

Located in an Indian village, away from pollution, on small hill, surrounded by paddy fields and coconut palms. This is a small centre run and owned by an expert Ayurvedic physician, Dr Ravi. He manufactures his own formulations on the campus where his house and the 10-bedded hospital are located. Possibility for advanced studies in Ayurveda. Ten attached rooms in a U-shape, with private treatment rooms.

Ayurvedic Trust Hospital

Olumbus, Ramanathapuram, Coimbatore,

Tamilnadu India • 0091-442-313188/314132

• ayurveda@md2.vsnl.net.in

Cost: US\$30 onwards.

Nearest airports: Coimbatore, Cochin, Madras.

For decades this is a centre of excellence in neurological, rheumatological and auto-immune diseases. The complex has a beautiful Dhanwantari temple, a publication division, research centre and library. The area can be noisy and polluted.

RESORTS

Nilayoram Resorts

001191-492-425788

Mg.menon mgmenon@sancharnet.in or

mgmenon@zyberway.com

Shoranur, Palakkad District, Kerala, South India

Cost: Around US\$55 a night.

Nearest airports: Cochin, Calicut, Trivandrum.

Set up on one of the most beautiful rivers in Kerala, the evergreen state of India, this is a resort with traditional Ayurvedic treatment. Ayurvedic experts and therapists from one of the oldest hospitals give consultations, counselling and perform the treatments.

Rajah Healthy Acres

Perumanoor, Chalissery, Palakkad District,

Kerala • India - 679 536

Phone: 0091 492 656305 / 656405 Fax:

0091 492 656215 • rha@rajahkajah.com

www.webindia.com/rajah/treat.htm

Cost: US\$60 onwards.

Nearest airports: Cochin, Calicut, Trivandrum.

A gorgeous and serene resort with an Ayurvedic facility, set in natural bush land 4 km away from a beautiful river. A huge variety of exciting accommodation including a sand floor vetivert hut! Like stepping into the Ramayana.

Ayurprastha

Kothagiry, Tamil Nadu (near Coimbatore)

Tel: 0091-422-313188 or 314132

ayurveda@md2.vsnl.net.in

Cost: US\$50 onwards.

Nearest airports: Coimbatore, Cochin, Calicut.

A peaceful, serene center, located in the cool "blue mountains" of South India. Managed by Ayurveda Trust Hospital.

Kappad Beach resort

Kappad • Kozhikode. 673304 • tel: 0496

683760 • moosa@kappadbeachresort.com

www.kapadbeachresort.com

Cost: US\$50 onwards.

Nearest airports: Calicut, Cochin, Trivandrum.

A good Ayurvedic unit with an expert physician in a peaceful beachside setting.

Kayaloram Lake resorts

Punchiri Building, Jetty road, Alleppy 658

011 • tel: 0091 477 260573, 242040

Fax: 0091 477 251 162

kayaloram@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in

kayaloram@vsnl.com

Cost: US\$100 onwards.

Nearest airports: Trivandrum, Cochin, Calicut.

An expensive, high class resort.

Coconut lagoon

Kumarakom, Kottayam, Kerala.

0091-481-524491/524373

Reservations: 0091-484-668221/668421.

Fax: 668001 • casino@vsnl.com

Cost: US\$100 onwards.

Nearest airports: Trivandrum, Cochin, Calicut.

An expensive, high class resort on the lake, adjacent to a bird sanctuary. Small, beautiful canals criss-cross the entire 25-acre resort compound. Transport by boats. They have two free house-boat cruises daily, the sunset cruise is with onboard musicians.

Kumarakom Lake resort

Kumarakom north, Kottayam

0091-481-524900/524501/525020

Fax: 524987 • klresort@vsnl.com

web: www.klresort.com

Cost: US\$150 onwards.

Nearest airports: Trivandrum, Cochin, Calicut.

A brand new, high-class, lakeside, unforgettable resort.

Surya samudra beach garden

Pulinkudi, Mullur, Trivandrum. 23 km from

trivandrum airport • Tel. 0091 0471

4840413

Cost: US\$140 onwards.

Nearest airports: Trivandrum, Cochin, Calicut.

An expensive, high class resort.

GERMANY

Ayurveda-care Centre for Ayurvedic Research and Education • Raiffiesenstrasse 23, 90427 Nuremberg, Deutschland • Tel: 0911 222 699, 321 8889 • Fax: 0049 0911 321 8888 • ayurveda-care@fen-net.de http://www.ayurveda-care.de

Experienced Indian trained Ayurvedic physician, Dr Jeevan, runs this educational & healing centre with his naturopath wife. Reasonable prices, authentic Ayurveda.

*Hope This Meets You
— in Good Health —*

AYURVEDIC TREATMENT of CONSTIPATION

Bhakta Peter



Definition

- Difficulty in passing stools.
- Incomplete or infrequent passage of stools.
- Urge to pass the stools but inability to do so.

General Information

- Constipation is common in civilized and advanced countries.
- Modern chemists sell more purgatives than any other medications.
- Constipation may be the complication of an infectious disease or especially *vata* diseases like neurosis, arthritis, epilepsy and paralysis. Treatment of constipation can be of service as a basic treatment for many nervous disorders.

• Causes (*Hetu*)

Wrong diet and lifestyle

- Artificial food.
- Wind forming food.
- Too little vegetables and water.
- Eating food which is difficult to digest.
- Lack of physical exercise.
- Sleeping late in the morning.
- Suppression of evacuation (suppression of natural urges is called *vega rodha* in Ayurveda).
- Sex in the early morning (weakens *apana vayu*).

- Too much coffee or tea (which are drying, i.e. diuretic).
- Lack of rest.
- Insomnia.
- Nervousness.
- Stress and fear.
- Overstimulation of the nervous system.
- Synthetic medications.
- Being bed ridden for long periods.

• Signs (*Purva rupa*)

Loss of appetite, feeling of indigestion, heaviness in abdomen after eating, nausea.

• Symptoms (*Rupa*)

Coated tongue (specially at the back, often of blackish brownish color), bad breath, excessive salivation, bleeding of gums, mouth ulcers, headaches, apathy, inability to evacuate stool.

According to Ayurveda there are constitutional states of the colon: soft, medium and hard indicating *pitta*, *kapha* and *vata* constitutions respectively.

Persons with a soft state of the colon tend towards loose and oily stool. In case of constipation the situation is easily cured by mild laxatives, like warm milk.

Kapha persons tend to have a medium state of the colon. These persons require stronger laxatives when constipated, or prolonged use of them.

Vata persons have a hard state of the colon. They may need strong laxatives first. If the constipation is chronic, it is difficult to cure. The colon is the main

dwelling place of *vata*. High *vata* leads to dryness of the colon and the accumulation of intestinal gas accompanied by distension of the abdomen and constipation. The tongue is heavily coated at the back, often the coating is of dark color, blackish or brownish. Bad breath is often present, flatulence, moving pain and headaches and anxiety are present.

The last 17 to 20 cm of the large intestine is called the rectum, the terminal portion is known as the anal canal. The mucous lining of the anal canal has many vertical folds, each of these contains an artery and a vein. If the veins of the canal become enlarged, the result is piles, also called hemorrhoids.

Two sphincter muscles, one internal composed of involuntary muscles, and one external composed of voluntary muscles, regulate the opening of the anal canal. The desire to defecate is the result of stimulation of the receptors in the rectal mucus membrane. Normally the rectum is empty. Peristalsis moves the feces from the colon to the rectum causing distension in the rectum, because of reflex action the desire to pass stool arises.

CONSTIPATION AND TREATMENT BY DOSHAS

***Kapha* constipation:** is usually the result of blockage due to mucus. Heaviness, lethargy and tiredness are typical signs. Stool will be of large

quantity and whitish in colour, often with mucus. The tongue is pale and coated with white mucus, the abdomen is bloated. The main cause is sluggishness and congestion in the colon. Heavy and mucus forming foods, sleeping during the day and excessive sleeping, lack of movement and physical exercise are further causes. *Kapha* constipation also occurs as a complication of *kapha* disorders in the upper body (stomach and respiratory disorders with excessive mucus draining down through the digestive system. Use anti-*kapha* therapies, expectorants or emesis.

Pitta constipation: is often found at the end of a febrile disease. Purgatives are permitted at the end of fevers in Ayurveda to clear away heat and toxins, but they are not permitted in early fevers.

Signs of *pitta* constipation are thirst, burning sensations, irritability, anger and sweating. The tongue is red with yellow coating accompanied by bad breath. Headaches, insomnia and violent dreams are further indications.

Principal causes of *pitta* constipation are excessively spiced food, sour and salty foods, non-vegetarian, greasy foods, insufficient taking of liquids, and exposure to heat. *Pitta* constipation is often accompanied by liver dysfunction, with congestion or obstruction of bile. Detoxification of the liver is necessary in this case. Give aloe vera (aloe gel is fine), rhubarb and senna, bitter herbs, gentian, barberry and turmeric. Gotu-kola calms the liver.

Vata constipation: Signs are intestinal gas and distention of the abdomen, variable appetite, insomnia, nervousness and palpitation, and pain moving about in the abdomen.

Vata constipation is caused by too much drying foods including beans, potatoes, cabbage, raw onions, potato and corn chips, peanuts, salads, cauliflower, and pumpkin. Meat, fish and eggs aggravate *vata* constipation (especially sea-fish and prawns). Peanuts and peanut-preparations are also bad as is excessive tea and coffee drinking (especially on empty stomach).

Psychological causes of *vata* constipation are worry, anxiety, fears, any kind of emotional upset. Treatments for *vata* constipation include herbal wines like kumariasava and draksasava etc. especially when taken after food. Sleep, good rest and mental peace are directly connected with digestion and metabolism. In India *triphala* (5-15 gm) is taken in water before sleep. 1-3 tsp of castor oil before sleep is useful, especially in constipation caused by disturbances of the nervous system. Epsom salt can be helpful too. In very obstinate constipation use stronger laxatives like senna or rhubarb as a start, but prolonged use of these will aggravate *vata*.

Enemas are useful in acute and chronic constipation. Use *vata* reducing herbs for decoction, like fennel and/or cardamom along with liquorice or sesame oil first, then follow up with a mixture of warm water and sesame oil (half a cup of each), hold for 20 minutes. Be careful not to be too radical in elimination therapy. Stool in the colon holds the earth element in the body; this keeps the air element from rising too high. Excessive elimination therapy may cause anxiety, insomnia, palpitation, fainting and heart pain.

Give an anti-*vata* and anti-*ama* diet; avoid ice cream, too much sweet food, cakes, dry fruit, sour fruit, and overeating. Spices and carminative herbs are useful (asafetida, ginger, fennel, cumin and cardamom), also chamomile and thyme.

After constipation has been eliminated, retrain the bowels for six to eight weeks.

START TREATMENTS BY FIRST REMOVING THE CAUSES

How to retrain the bowels?

1. Find out the causes of the constipation and eliminate these.
2. Use a high fiber diet, vegetables and fruits particularly.

3. Do not repress the urge to defecate. Indian village wisdom: If you are not sure whether to eat or not—don't. If you are not sure whether to go to the toilet—go.

4. Drink about 8 glasses of water (or fluid) per day.
5. Exercise regularly.
6. Stop using laxatives and enema as soon as you can.
7. Take warm milk with ghee before bed in the first week, gradually decrease.
8. Ginger linctus (*sunthi avaleha*).

This preparation is very good for digestion, chronic constipation, chronic sinusitis and many types of headaches. It eliminates *ama* from the system. It is suitable for everybody.

Preparation of ginger linctus

Ingredients: Knots of root of nutgrass (*Cyperus rotundus* or *musta*) 24 gm. Cumin seed powder 48 gm. Nutmeg powder 24 gms. Mace powder 24 gm. Clove powder 48 gm. Cinnamon powder 48 gm. Cardamom powder 48 gm. Celery seed powder 24 gm. Coriander powder 48 gm. Black pepper powder 24 gm. Ginger powder 400 gm. Brown sugar 1.5 kg (for syrup 500 ml water). Ghee 400 gm. Cow's milk 1.5 l. Honey 500 ml.

1. Melt 200 gm ghee and fry the ginger powder lightly.
2. Take off the flame and stir, till no dry ginger is left.
3. Put back on the flame, add 1.5 l of cow's milk, stir to make a paste.
4. In the meantime put 1.5 kg of brown sugar in another pan, add the water and make a syrup. When this is ready, add it to the ginger-ghee-milk-mix. Blend well by stirring.
5. Add 24 gm of crushed celery seeds, the nutgrass knots, cumin, coriander and black pepper, and continue cooking till all is sticky and well thickened. Allow to cool.
6. Now add the rest of the ghee, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, clove and honey.
7. Keep in tight containers. Keeps well for at least two years. ❀

Peaceful Periods

**Caroline Robertson, N.D.
and Rama Prasad, B.A.M.S.**



Curse or blessing, most women are faced with the challenge of the monthly menses. Associated with shame, bloating, mess, and pain it can really cramp one's lifestyle.

Transformed into a meaningful experience of renewal and heightened awareness, women can grow to see their periods with a spirit of gratitude and feminine strength.



TRADITIONS AND TABOOS

In many ancient societies, the menstruating woman was both revered for her creative power and feared for her influential ability. During menses rituals of seclusion, rest and sexual abstinence were uniformly practiced in most native cultures. These developed in recognition that women are undergoing a purification that focuses energy within, endowing them with an expanded connection with the universe that is best utilized in a quiet, introverted and fully conscious way. It allowed them to redirect their capacity for loving and nurturing inward as a means of renewal and growth.

Superstitions about menstruating women abound. Beliefs that they have dangerous supernatural powers to infect people and objects are completely unfounded. The underlying paranoia being that menstrual blood, containing the essence of femininity, would overpower man's virility.

As was shown in two independent studies, women living in traditional cultures still see menstruation in a positive light, a time for purification in order to maintain health and to renew inner resources. Given the choice they would not submit to voluntary amenorrhea as might result from the contraceptive pill!

SCARLET WOMAN

Most women will never forget that shocking, sickening surprise. An event that psychologist G. Stanley Hall termed "a second birth," but many women remember feeling like death. A death to the carefree, blood free, pain free youth. Hello to the responsibility of this uninvited monthly guest.

A guest that can arrive unexpectedly at the most awkward moments, stain our image of superhuman female control and possibly cast aspersions on our cleanliness and capabilities.

Realization of our vulnerability as women dawns as we try to conceive how we will cope with the rest of our forty menstrual years. Mixed feelings of disbelief, shame, anxiety, revulsion, and excitement pulse through our bodies as we puzzle over the tampon instruction leaflet. There is often little solace during this difficult phase of adjustment. No Hallmark card which says "Congratulations on your period!", no feast of acknowledgment, no ritual to honor the coming of age. In Gloria Steinem's hilarious 1978 essay "If Men Could Menstruate" she notes that men would boast with bravado, shooting off cannons to mark the advent of their manhood. Yet many

girls feel too embarrassed or ashamed to tell anyone, struggling to keep a stoic face while their bodies cry out for recognition.

Most native cultures mark the onset of periods with rituals, appreciating the sacred passage from girlhood to womanhood. Mohave Indians record the dreams during the onset of periods, believing that they predict one's future life. In India it is a time for celebration where the girl is initially secluded and educated about her condition and sexual responsibilities then she is ceremonially bathed and dressed, placed on a throne and visited by gift-bearing friends and relatives who then all share in a ceremonial feast. Menstruation is celebrated as a momentous rite of passage, a gateway to new perceptions and procreative possibilities for a woman. An Indian expression describes this awakening as "a flower blossoming in the god of love's abode."

Today's society has developed secret, shameful behavior in coping with "the curse." Becoming mistresses of control, tactfully circling the pharmacy until a female assistant can sell us the disguised flowery "feminine hygiene product," (so thin no one will know), wearing dark colors to camouflage fateful spillage, cunningly checking our skirt for blotches, anxiously trying to dispose of pads, soldiering on with painkillers to dull the congestive pain. A flood of relief sweeping over us as we make it through another month without suffering the humiliation of discovery. The extreme of this control mania is to completely stop our periods through anorexia, excessive exercise or contraceptives. The media supports this "cover-up" approach to periods with slogans like "your secret is safe," "no one will ever know" as absorbency is demonstrated with aesthetic blue liquid.

Why can't we see menstruation as a common female experience rather than a secret shame? It is time to exorcise the curse and appreciate the positive dimension periods bring to a female's truly remarkable psychophysiology.

MOTHER NATURE'S CYCLES

The female body parallels the cycles of mother nature and mirrors her cosmic process of reproduction. Attuned minutely to the lunar energy cycles the woman fluctuates like the waxing and waning of the moon and the subsequent tidal ebb and flow. The term "menses" comes from the Greek word for month which earlier meant "moon." A typical period is generally 29.5 days, the length of a lunar month. In this way the menstrual cycle reminds us of our biological connection with nature. A connection that has been envied and feared by men over the ages. All cycles in nature have a component of renewal that promotes rejuvenation and growth. The dormancy during winter gives rise to the blooms of spring, the evening hours of sleep allow for energy and endurance during waking hours. In such a way the menstrual cycle helps a woman to maintain both physical and psychological equilibrium.

The approximately 450 periods we will experience over 40 years are not simply a test of our endurance or penance for past sins. They are a purifying mechanism to promote health and longevity. Physically the inner lining of the uterus is sloughed off monthly in order to renew it for procreation and sexual health. The accumulated toxins in the blood are removed as well as the extraneous elements ether, air, fire, water and earth. Guarding against disease and providing an environment for health, the menses should be acknowledged and appreciated as a blessing rather than a curse. Men of the Wogeo tribe of Papua New Guinea, desiring the blood purification benefits of menstruation for themselves, resort to cutting their glans penis throughout their life in a ceremony of artificial blood letting.

Psychologically women also undergo phases of purification, rest and renewal. C.G. Jung's observation that menstruation awakened females to states of inner knowing have been explored by the studies of Dr Therese Benedik and Dr Boris Rubenstein. Investigating the affect of hormone



"The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will interest his patients in diet, in care of the human frame and in the cause and prevention of disease"

— Thomas Edison



"For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven."

— Ecclesiastes



The Pill & its side effects

Minor acne; asthma; breakthrough bleeding; cervical erosions; disturbed liver function; eyedisorders; ec-zema; facial and body hair growth; fluid retention; fungal infections; hair loss; hay fever; low libido; lumpy or tender breasts; migraines; mood changes; mouth ulcers; nausea; psychological disorders such as depression; rhinitis; secretions from breasts; skin discoloration; skin rashes; systemic candida infection; urinary tract infections; varicose veins; venereal warts; vaginal discharges; weight gain.

There is also a major in-creased risk of ectopic pre-gnancy; infertility; osteopo- rosis; blood clots; high blood-pressure; heart attacks; stroke; arteriosclerosis; and gall stones. It also causes disturbance to blood sugar metabolism which is connected with hypoglycemia and diabetes. There are also possible links with cancer of the breast, cervix, ovaries, lungs, and liver.

fluctuations on woman's perceptual abilities and emotional lives they observed a marked pattern. During ovulation women were more outgoing and creative and during menstruation they were more introverted and hyper-sensitive. During menstruation studies have shown a decrease in the external senses of sight, hearing and smell coupled with a corresponding increase in the internal states of the body such as thinking, feeling and memory. The converse is true during ovulation with a decrease in pain sensitivity and an increase in the external senses of smell, hearing and sight.

Jungian analyst Ann Ulanov echoes these findings stating, "At ovulation a woman's body is receptive and fertile. She may then feel an emotional expansiveness, an abundance of sexual energy, a new potency in her creative ideas and inspiration."

Famous author Virginia Woolf laid testimony to this stating that her hormones "unleashed the flow of imagination." It is no wonder then that the word hormone is derived from the Greek "hormao" meaning "to excite."

The cyclical nature of females allows them to regularly flush their mind and body of impurities and enjoy richly varied feelings and experiences throughout the month. All thanks to the logical biology (bio-logic) instilled in us by the wisdom of mother nature.

HORMONAL HARMONY

To appreciate the nature of menstruation and the origin of period problems it helps to understand the basic dynamics behind the process. The hypothalamus, pineal, pituitary and ovaries are all harmoniously integrated to open an egg for fertilization and prepare the womb for implantation. These glands are deeply influenced by the "higher" centers of the brain which are involved in thought, senses, memory, creativity and the stress response. Responding to a myriad of subtle influences such as light, pheromones, emotions, sex, nutrition, and biofeedback from other

organs and glands.

This complicated interdependence of the menstrual cycle with practically all other biological functions means that balanced hormones are inextricably reliant on the balance of all other body systems. In most cases of menstrual problems, simply treating the symptoms with local medications such as painkillers, contraceptive pills, hormonal or reproductive tonics will fail to get long-term, effective results as the deeper underlying factors have not been addressed.

All systems of the body are in some-way involved with the menstrual process—the endocrine glands stimulate hormone secretion, the adrenal glands assist in their manufacture, the liver helps to break them down and the musculo-skeletal system with the gastrointestinal system assists in their elimination. Recognizing the interplay of all these factors we come to acknowledge that our menstrual health is reliant on the fundamental quality of our life and treatment of menstrual problems involves reassessing all aspects of our lives.

GO WITH THE FLOW

Lifestyle during the period

- Relax and rest for the first three days. Resting for the first three days of the period allows us to enjoy greater energy and well-being throughout the following month. If you can't manage total rest, at least reduce the number of commitments at this time and aim to get to bed early. Conversely, stress or over-activity during this time can leave us tired for the rest of the month.
- Have a light, warm, liquid diet (the digestion is weaker during menstruation).
- Avoid cold, dry, heavy, gas-producing foods and drinks (e.g. carbonated drinks, cheese, chocolate, sugar and oily foods).
- Indulge in light activities such as reading and creative hobbies.

- Light stretching and walking are recommended, but strenuous exercise should be avoided.
- Get sufficient sleep, but avoid daytime sleep. This promotes blood stagnation and weakens digestion.
- Avoid extensive travel. This can cause cramps and disturb an even flow.
- Avoid sex. Abstinence during the periods is advised because as Soranus of the 2nd century writes “The uterus is already overburdened and congested due to the ingress of material and incapable of carrying out two motions contrary to each other, one for the excretion of material and the other for receiving.”² This is conversant with Ayurvedic theory which explains that the downward flow of menstruation is disturbed by the upward flow of intercourse. Due to the lowered vaginal acidity during menses women are also more susceptible to trichomoniasis, vaginitis and thrush infection through intercourse.
- Culturing positive thoughts at this time through affirmations, visualizations or meditation helps to establish a constructive momentum for the rest of the month.³
- Prefer using pads to tampons.

LIFESTYLE THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

Riding nature’s rhythms allows you to ride the monthly red wave with ease. A regulated routine helps to rebalance the daily rhythms of our lives which then act to stabilize the monthly menstrual cycle. If your sleep, diet, rest and exercise are balanced during the month you will notice the positive effect on your menstruation.

- Regulate your sleeping patterns. The pineal gland which triggers hormones is synchronized by the balance of dark and light. Irregular sleep can put our period out of synch.
- Try to sleep near a window. This helps to align our hormonal cycle with the balancing lunar energy.
- Give yourself a daily massage with

warm sesame oil followed by a warm epsom salts bath.

- Regular exercise helps to keep the abdominal muscles and spine strong. It also increases the circulation, preventing congestion that leads to cramps.
- Prevent constipation with a high fiber diet and drink at least four glasses of warm herbal tea daily.
- Avoid foods which increase prostaglandin 2 and arachidonic acid in the body and block prostaglandin 1 and 3. This has the affect of over stimulating uterine contractions leading to heavier cramping.
- Foods to not eat include animal fats, alcohol, eggs and fried foods. Many meats and eggs also contain estrogen which disturbs one’s natural hormonal balance. Also avoid sugar, salt, tea, coffee, soft drinks, fried foods, chocolate, cold foods, drinks and recreational drugs.
- Foods to have include soy products, nuts, seeds, monounsaturated cold pressed oils, fresh fruit and vegetables, warm herbal teas, split mung dal, whole grains.

PMS MADE ME DO IT

Two murderers in England got reduced sentences because they proved that premenstrual stress (PMS) precipitated the mental imbalance that caused them to commit the crime.⁴

Have you ever laid on the brink of insanity and self-destruction for no apparent reason? Snapping at trifles, tripping over yourself, unable to make even the simplest decisions and judging your life as a hopeless mess? Maybe it was accompanied by tender breasts, a few extra kilos, headaches and—the cherry on top—pimples! Did your periods arrive soon after as you realised that PMS was the culprit behind the dark hours? Like a cloud has been lifted, for many the period offers a welcome respite from the dramatic influence of PMS.

Defined back in 1931, over 150

Deficiencies: vitamins A, B1, B2, B6, B12, C, E; iron, zinc, prostoglandins, low density lipoprotein(cholesterol scavengers).

Tampon facts

Tampons are linked to Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS), an infection which involves the proliferation of *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria.

Symptoms include vomiting, fever, diarrhea, fainting, dizziness, rash, peeling skin, paralysis, gangrene and eventual loss of fingers and toes. Super absorbent tampons made of polyester and carboxymethyl cellulose are particularly linked to TSS.

The chlorine bleaching process produces toxic biproducts dioxin and furan which damages the immune and reproductive systems, is linked with birth defects, headaches, and cancer according to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

According to Ayurveda, tampons also impede the free passage and clearance of the menstrual flow. If you have to use tampons avoid the super absorbent type and change your tampon every two hours.

Eco Yam has organic un-bleached tampons that are the safest option. Try to use pads at night and when your flow is light.



Vata (Air & Ether)

Avoid: Cold, dry, uncooked foods. Stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine and alcohol. Nuts and gas producing vegetables. Overexertion and irregularity. Excessive traveling. Dry, cold, windy weather.

Favor: Cooked, warm, soupy meals with grains, vegetables and mild spices such as cumin, ginger and fennel. Regulated eating, sleeping and exercise. Low impact, energizing exercise such as yoga, cycling or walking. Daily self-massage with warm sesame oil.

Pitta (Fire & Water)

Avoid: Spicy, hot, oily, salty, sour food. Stimulants such as alcohol, sugar and caffeine. Tomatoes, chilies, garlic, radishes and vinegar. Exposure to heat from the sun, sauna and other sources. Placing excessive demands and pressures on oneself. Violent stimuli such as intense movies, arguments or heavy music.

Favor: Cooling spices and vegetables such as coriander, cardamom, turmeric, mint, cucumbers, melons, celery, lettuce and green beans.

Uncompetitive exercises such as swimming, yoga and dancing.

Essential oils of sandalwood, vetiver, jasmine, rose and lotus. A creative, playful hobby helps *pitta* to channel mental energy in a relaxed mode.

Kapha (Water & Earth)

Avoid: Dairy products, nuts, oily and sweet foods. Cold, fatty and heavy foods. Excessive sleeping, eating and slothing. Co-dependant relationships.

Favor: A low calorie diet with light foods such as steamed vegetables, barley and spices including pepper, asafetida, mustard seeds, ginger and cinnamon. Supervised fasting.

Rigorous exercise such as power walking, low impact aerobics and climbing. A job that is challenging and satisfying with physical demands. Essential oils such as musk, clove, frankincense, ginger and myrrh.

symptoms in nearly every organ system has been attributed to PMS. No definitive theory has proved to explain the specific cause of PMS, yet doctors and natural therapists recognize that stress, lack of exercise, poor diet and liver dysfunction all contribute towards PMS. Ayurveda, the ancient Indian healing science, explains that the premenstrual phase is when all suppressed mental and physical impurities that have accumulated over the month are stirred to the surface. The degree of PMS is determined by the level of blood impurities, organ weaknesses, hormonal imbalance and emotional suppression. Some suffer more with physical symptoms whereas for others PMS manifests primarily in the mental sphere. The unlucky ones get both.

A study of 26 female college students showed consistent premenstrual themes of inadequacy, hostility, mood swings, crabbiness, impatience, depression, lethargy, delusions, indecisiveness, nymphomaniac, thoughts of death, and fear of accidents. During ovulation the same women expressed more joy, peacefulness, achievement, fertility and self-confidence.

Physical premenstrual symptoms may include: cramping, bloating, backache, pain, dizziness, nervousness, depression, tension, irritability, feeling faint, restlessness, sluggishness, water retention, easy bruising, migraines, hypoglycemia, craving for sweets, increase of energy with an inability to direct this energy into productive channels. This is also reflected in the animal kingdom with studies proving that female baboons eat more and are less social premenstrually. Ayurveda explains that prior to menstruation all bodily elements accumulate.

Ayurvedic categories of PMS

PMS and menstrual problems come from the underlying elemental imbalances of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. All imbalances generally start with *vata*. Many people have a combination of these categories. The chart given on the left will give you some general tips to balance these elements.

Mismanaging Menses

Orthodox approaches to managing menstrual difficulties tend to override or manipulate natural bodily functions in a futile attempt to ignore them. Meanwhile the underlying problem is getting worse but because the symptoms are being masked one often doesn't realize this until the medication is stopped. Synthetic hormones and painkillers tend to exacerbate the problem in the long term as extra stress is put on the liver to eliminate the drugs and handicaps the body's capacity to break down hormones.

The Pill is most popularly used in an attempt to disguise and suppress the natural cycle. It has been taken in greater quantities than any prescribed drug in history. But users must ask themselves of the risks they run in trying to mimic mother nature. The long term and generational affects of the contraceptive pill are still to be fully explored yet in the USA. Detailed warnings of possible side affects of the Pill are compulsory with every prescription given—sufficient evidence to cast grave doubts on the safety of the contraceptive pill. Bear in mind that progesterone supplements have been found to be no more effective than a placebo.

The healthy and harmonious functioning of the female reproductive system has subtle yet far-reaching affects on a woman's general welfare, promoting vitality, attractiveness, and an optimistic approach to life. Diet, exercise, vitamins, minerals, herbs, massage, osteopathy, acupressure, yoga, and meditation are just some of the therapies that can have a positive influence on the reproductive system.

Treatment of PMS

Herbs: chaste tree (*Vitex agnus castus*), false unicorn root (*Aletris farinosa*), passion flower (*Passiflora incarnata*), vervain (*Verbena vervain*), dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinalis*), skullcap (*Scutellaria laterifolia*), liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), St Johns Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*).

Essential oils: clary sage, jasmine,

geranium, fennel, neroli, chamomile, lavender.

Cramps

Herbs: black haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), cramp bark (*Viburnum opulus*), wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*), kava kava (*Piper methysticum*), raspberry leaf (*Rubus idaeus*), asafetida, ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*), valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*).

Essential oils: chamomile, lavender, geranium, rosemary, fennel, sweet marjoram.

Irregular

Herbs: chaste tree (*Vitex agnus castus*), false unicorn root (*Aletris farinosa*), sarsaparilla (*Smilax utilis*), liquorice (*glycyrrhiza glabra*), dong quay (*Angelica sinensis*), squaw vine (*Mitchella repens*), aloe vera juice, sage (*Salvia officinalis*), shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*), golden seal (*Hydrastis canadensis*).

Essential oils: angelica, basil, jasmine, peppermint, patchouli, sandalwood, rose, ylang ylang, clary sage, rose, hyssop, thyme.

Heavy

Herbs: St Marys thistle (*Silybum marianum*), shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa pastoris*), oak bark (*Quercus robur*), shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*), nettles (*Urtica dioica*), periwinkle (*Vines major*), crane's bill (*Geranium maculatum*).

Essential oils: cinnamon, geranium, cypress, lime, terebinth, rose.

Homeopathic: There are many highly effective homeopathic remedies to attain hormonal harmony. Please consult a homeopath to get a remedy most suitable for your mind, body, and spirit.

Yoga Postures for Female Health

Yoga and breathing are effective means to reduce menstrual pain and regulate

one's cycle. Yoga encourages the flow of blood in the body by opening up all the circulatory channels, massaging and compressing the glands and internal organs. With yoga stale blood is compressed out, allowing fresh blood to circulate.

Many of the recommended postures act on the base *chakra* (mooladhara) which is the subtle seat of sexual and primal energy in the body. We advise you to seek the guidance of a qualified yoga instructor to gain the full benefits of the following postures: surya namaskar, paschimottanasana, bhujanasana, shalabhasana, dhanurasana, chakrasana, ushtrasana, sirshasana, sarvangasana, halasana, moola bandha, ashwini mudra, pawanamuktasana, hanumanasana, vipareeta karini mudra, agni sara kriya. To relieve cramp: vajrasana, shashankasana, marjariasana, shavasana, abdominal breathing in shavasana. 🌸

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Notes

¹ Robert Snowden and Barbara Christian (eds.) (1981). *Patterns and Perceptions of Menstruation in World Health Organisation International Collaborative Study*. New York: St Martin's Press.

² Owesei Ternkin (transl.). (1956). *Soranus "Gynecology"*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 35.

³ Mary Chadwick. *The Psychological Effects of Menstruation*. In: Norris and Sullivan. *PMS: Premenstrual Syndrome*, p. 4.

⁴ *Women's Best Medicine*. Chapter five.

Vata type (air & ether)

Premenstrual: nervous tension, pain, cramps, back aches, mood swings, forgetfulness, depression, anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, constipation, and abdominal bloating.

Menstrual: long periods, irregular periods, light flow, dark clotted flow, and spotting.

Common diagnosis: endo-metriosis and dysmenorrhea.

Pitta type (fire & water)

Premenstrual: irritability, anger, increased appetite, sugar cravings, headaches, excess body heat or sweating, diarrhea, skin rashes, and acne.

Menstrual: excessive bleeding increased frequency of periods, and headaches.

Common diagnosis: Menorrhagia, endometrial hyperplasia, and dysfunctional uterine bleeding.

Kapha type (water & earth)

Premenstrual: weight gain, fluid retention, breast enlargement, lethargy, vaginal yeast infections, and sluggish digestion.

Menstrual: back pain, joint pain, pale mucus like menstrual flow, and clots.

Common diagnosis: fibrocystic breast disease, fluid retention, ovarian cysts, uterine fibroids, and vaginitis.

Nutritional Supplements:

B-complex with at least 400 mcg; folic acid daily; iron chelate 30 mg daily or Floradix Liquid Iron; vitamin C 2,000 mg daily in divided doses; bio-flavanoids 400 mg daily; zinc chelate 25 mg daily; calcium 800 mg daily; magnesium aspartate 400mg daily; vitamin E 10 mg daily; evening primrose oil 3,000 mg daily, vitamin A. Please seek the guidance of a naturopath to ensure proper dosage and appropriate usage.

CHANT

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Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare***

...and be happy!



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