

HEALTH

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TCM

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Ebb and flow

Menstrual problems affect most women at some time during their reproductive life.

According to a recent survey by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, one in 10 local women has heavy menstrual problems, and 90 per cent of them aren't aware of medical advances that allow quick and easy treatment.

Excessive bleeding can lead to anaemia and fatigue, but many women are unwilling to seek help because they feel embarrassed to talk about it.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) regards blood as an elementary substance for functions such as pregnancy, childbirth, lactation and menstruation.

Many gynaecological problems are connected to blood, according to the TCM view. For example, heavy menses can lead to a blood deficiency, and blood stagnation and overheating are viewed as causes of heavy menses.

A TCM practitioner can examine your blood condition easily. A pale look, fatigue, brittle, thin nails and hair, restless sleep and poor memory are all signs of blood deficiency.

A gloomy, withered look, pigmented skin patches, dark eye circles, dry and lustreless skin, and hair loss can indicate blood stagnation.

Signs that blood is overheated include greasy skin, acne, a flushed face, prematurely greying hair, dark yellow urine and constipation. Having unhealthy blood can also trigger early signs of ageing.

TCM can help by working on the inside of the body to improve skin tone, facial complexion and skin texture, as well as overall health. Routine treatment therapies involve regulating and replenishing the blood methods for these purposes.

For women, normally regulated menses signify not only proficient blood circulation, but also the entire being – physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual.

Hundreds of herbs have been identified and used – along with acupuncture, massage, diet and lifestyle changes – to treat menses

problems. The therapeutic methods are comprehensive and customised to an individual's condition. They generally have less adverse effects than conventional drug therapies and have shown no inhibiting effect on ovary functioning for long-term use when monitored by an experienced practitioner.

Common herbs used for excessive menses include angelica, noto-ginseng, peony root, rehmannia root, nut grass and motherwort (left).

Many patented traditional Chinese medicines are available in shops. Black Chicken and White

Phoenix Bolus (*Wu Ji Bai Feng Wan*) is one popular tonic. This traditional medicine contains 20 ingredients and is combined to replenish the *chi* and blood to regulate menstruation.

It's used for irregular menses, menstrual pain, excess or scanty menses and excessive vaginal discharge. If you're undergoing hormone therapy or artificial insemination, you should consult your physician to avoid any possible drug interference.

Consult your TCM or medical practitioner before taking any medicine