

stay in balance

Natural remedies can help keep PMS symptoms at bay.

When monthly preperiod cramping, moodiness, and fatigue hit, it's tempting to pop a pain reliever, down some caffeine, and keep powering through your day. But numbing the discomfort or giving yourself an artificial energy boost won't address the underlying causes of your symptoms. According to Nancy Lonsdorf, an Ayurvedic-medicine practitioner and the author of *The Ageless Woman: Natural Health and Beauty After 40 with Maharishi Ayurveda*, premenstrual syndrome is an invitation to bring your body back into balance.

"PMS is not a disease; it's just a sign of an imbalance," Lonsdorf says. "If you have PMS, it's a signal that your diet and lifestyle are disturbing your natural equilibrium."

Not getting enough sleep, eating poorly, stress, and lack of exercise can burden a body already dealing with monthly hormonal fluctuations. Lonsdorf suggests cutting down on sweets and caffeine as your cycle progresses, allowing yourself to sleep a bit more on the first days of menstruation, and doing gentle exercise, including yoga, all month long. "Most women can manage PMS with natural approaches," she says. HEATHER BOERNER

See PMS asana sequence on the next page.



nature's choice

CHINESE HERBS Chinese herbs may be better at treating symptoms of PMS than over-the-counter pain relievers, according to a review of 39 studies. Jamie Koonce, a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine in Hot Springs, Arkansas, recommends the tincture preparation *xiao shao san* (Rambling Powder), which contains herbs for regulating hormones, stimulating circulation, relieving cramps, and reducing inflammation. For mild cases, take one dropperful three times a day (with meals) the week before your period. For more-severe cases, take it throughout the month.

SAFFRON A clinical trial found that women who took 30 mg in capsule form every day for two cycles experienced significant reduction in overall PMS symptoms within a month.

Herbs, spices, and supplements for PMS relief.

CALCIUM, MAGNESIUM, AND B6 The calming effect of these supplements can reduce PMS-related anxiety and balance the nervous system, according to Roberta Lee, medical director of the Center for Health and Healing at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York. Take 500 to 1,000 mg of calcium daily, 400 to 500 mg of magnesium at night, and 25 to 40 mg of B6 daily one week before your period begins.

CHASTEBERRY (VITEX AGNUS-CASTUS) This tree's berries have been found to balance estrogen and progesterone levels, which may relieve breast tenderness and calm your nervous system, Lee says. Take 20 to 40 mg three times a day throughout your cycle.