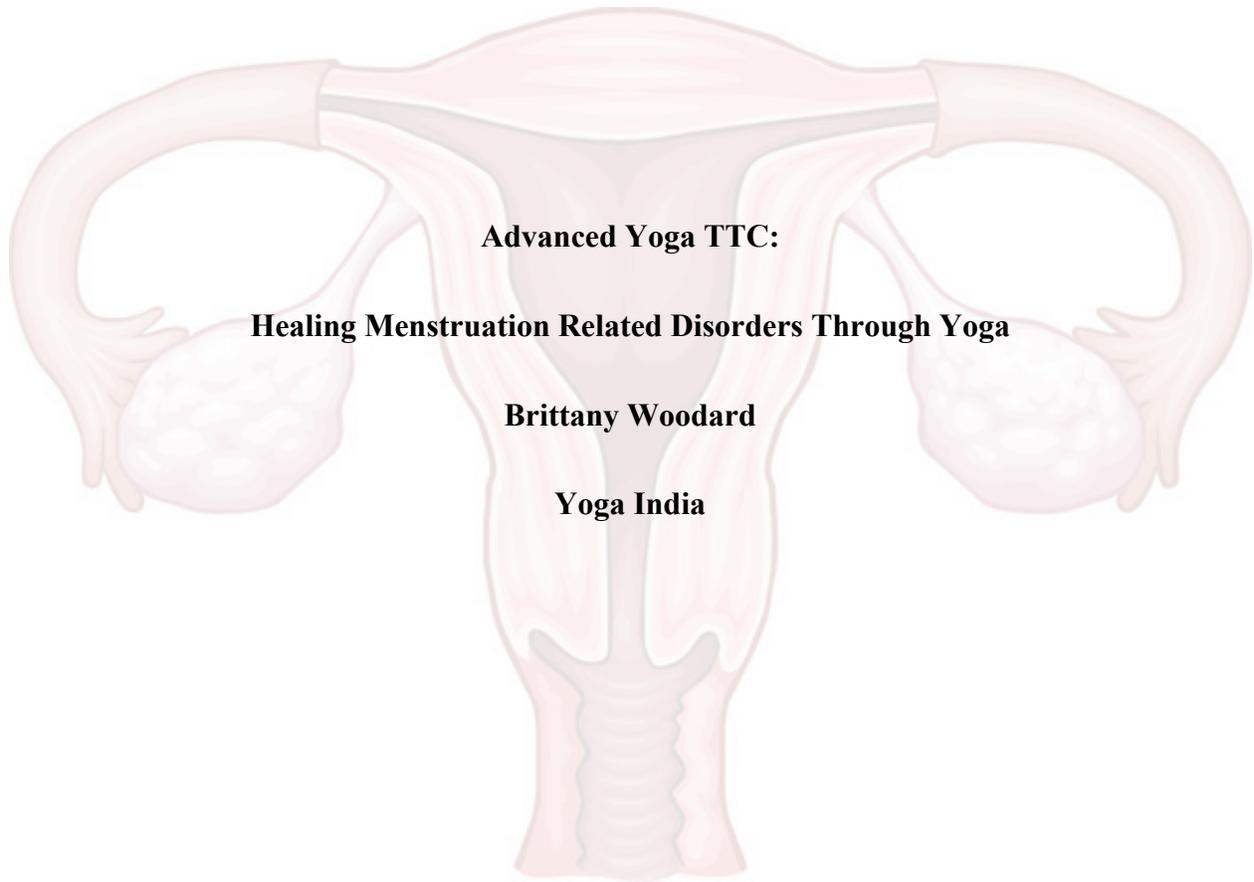


Healing Menstruation Related Disorders Through Yoga

By Brittany Woodard- March 2015



Introduction

For years, both men and women have viewed menstruation as something negative. Men are afraid of it and women dread it. But menstruation symbolizes womanhood, our divine

connection to Earth and the ability to reproduce. Menstruation should not be something that we dread but rather something we celebrate. But with the painful stomach cramps and headaches, fatigue, bloating, irritability, and moodiness, it is no surprise that a stigma has latched onto a woman's monthly cycle.

Within the course of cultural evolution, we have changed our diets from local whole foods to unnatural, genetically modified "food;" exercise less; work more; and live in constant state of fight or flight mode, a state of unnecessary and dangerous stress. Meanwhile we still have a body that has adapted to living in small, self-sustaining communities. The discomforts and disorders that accompany menstruation exist due to our lifestyle choices and can be prevented and cured without the use of hormones and toxic medication. The following paper will discuss some menstrual disorders, their causes, complications and remedies, as well as a yoga program for a women suffering from any menstrual related disorders. I hope that one-day women will wear their cycle with pride as it represents so much beauty Mother Earth has given.

Overview

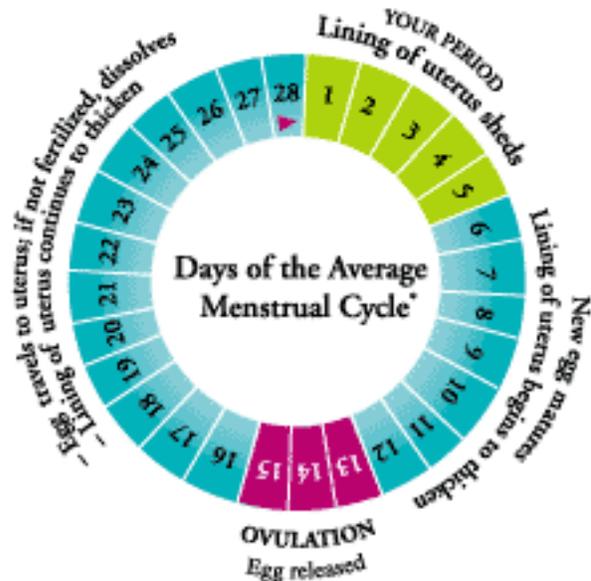
From puberty to menopause, the average women will have a period once a month, which is the shedding of the uterine lining in the form of blood. On average, a women will bleed for three to five days however this varies a great deal as each woman has a different body with a different lifestyle. The monthly cycle is from the first day of a woman's period to the first day of her next period and an average cycle is around 28 days, but again, this varies from woman to woman. The first half of a woman's cycle, the uterine lining thickens to create a healthy place for an embryo in the event a pregnancy occurs. Ovulation occurs when a mature egg leaves the ovum,

a period when a woman is able to become pregnant. If the woman does not become pregnant, she will discharge her uterine wall, which is her period.

During a typical cycle, a woman will feel many things. During ovulation, the time when a woman is capable of becoming pregnant, she will feel sexually charged, beautiful and with a

lot of energy. After ovulation, women

experience premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and experience breast tenderness, bloating, fatigue, irritability, and become very sensitive emotionally. As I mentioned earlier, most of the symptoms of PMS are due to lifestyle choices of the modern woman.



* Note: This diagram shows a 28-day cycle. Some women's cycles may be longer or shorter.

Disorders

Dysmenorrhea

- Menstrual cramps
- There are two types of dysmenorrhea, primary and secondary
 - Primary dysmenorrhea
 - Typically found in adolescence and is often psychosomatic
 - Because the threshold for pain is low for teens, the primary dysmenorrhea often dissolves with age however the disorder itself usually disappears with childbirth.

- Symptoms: Just hours before menstruation begins, pain develops in the lower abdomen, back and thighs that can lead to nausea, diarrhea, headache, breast tenderness and fatigue. In some cases, cold sweats, fainting and discoloration of the skin may occur as well.
- Secondary dysmenorrhea
 - Causes: occurs when there are pelvic invaders, such as endometriosis, adenomyosis, fibroid, endometrial polyp, (or the placement of an] intra uterine contraceptive devices (IUD).
 - The pain in secondary is different from primary as it develops three to five days prior to menstruation rather than hours before and is relieved at the start of bleeding
- Treatment: nadi suddi, kapalabhti, halasana, pavana muktasana kriya (wind releasing pose), moola bandha

Menorrhagia

- Excessive bleeding in amount and/or duration and is due to two organs or hormones
 - Organic Causes: fibroid uterus, adenomyosis and ovarian masses, TB endometrium, endometriosis, liver dysfunction, congestive cardiac failure, hypo and hyperthyroidism, leukemia, emotional upset
 - Hormonal Causes: hypothalamus, pituitary, ovarian or endometrial axis
- Treatment: setu bandhasana

Metrorrhagia

- Irregular bleeding outside the woman's menstrual cycle and is not limited menstrual bleeding as it is bleeding from any part of the genital tract

- Causes: dysfunctional uterine bleeding (DUB) during adolescence, following childbirth and abortion, preceding menopause; uterine fibroid and polyp; carcinoma of the cervix and endometrium; TB of the cervix and endometriosis
- Treatment: baddha konasana coupled with sarvangasana, setu bandhasana, bhujangasana

Oligomenorrhea

- Menstrual cycles with 35+ days in between each other
- Common in adolescence and preceding menopause, and very athletic women
- Causes: Endocrine dysfunction or systemic disorders
- Treatment: for women who have a vigorous exercise, they should change their workout routine to something less intense.

Hypomenorrhea

- When bleeding within a cycle lasts less than two days
- Causes: Endocrine disturbance, thyroid dysfunction, premenopausal period, use of oral contraceptives, tuberculosis, malnutrition or sudden weight loss
- Treatment: pavana muktasana kriya (wind releasing pose)

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

- Change in mood or behavior in the second half of the cycle and usually goes away after menstruation
- Symptoms: bloating, breast tenderness, weight gain, emotional disturbances, irritability, depression, insomnia, anxiety, headache, fatigue
- Causes: Unknown however some believe there may be a link to the level of estrogen and progesterone.

- In Chinese Medicine, the cause of PMS is the way one manages stress, amount of exercise and diet.
- According to Amy Raupp, a woman's period "should come regularly and be between 28 and 32 days apart (where the first day of bleeding is the Day 1 of [her] cycle). They should come on quietly, with slight breast tenderness and very little cramping."
- Treatment: kapalabhti, meditation, moola bandha, and asanas that improve circulation in the pelvic region

Menopause

- The time in a woman's life when her menstrual cycle ends
- Results:
 - Ovaries, uterus and nipples shrink fallopian tubes thin, uterus shrinks
 - Endometrium and the inner layer of the bladder and urethra thins
 - Vagina narrows
 - Vaginal Ph becomes alkaline
 - Pubic hair becomes scantier
 - Breast fat is reabsorbed
- Effects:
 - Hot flashes
 - Urinary urgency and recurring urinary infections
 - Anxiety, headache, insomnia, irritability and depression
 - Osteoporosis, fractures due to the decreased level of estrogen in the blood
 - Heart health as estrogen controls the level of lipids in the blood and there is a decrease of estrogen during menopause

- According to scientific research, “problems associated with menopause are closely correlated with one’s mental and emotional state...[Swami Buddhananda says] the practice of moola bandha allows for a smooth metamorphosis at this time by re-balancing hormonal changes, preventing such unpleasant symptoms as lethargy, irritability depression, high blood pressure and giddiness.”

Genital Prolapse

- A hernia that occurs due to the decent of the vaginal wall or uterus and is usually found in women who have had multiple childbirths.
- Causes:
 - Congenital weakness of the supporting soft tissue structures.
 - Injuries to the supporting structures (ie. Pelvic floor muscles) during vaginal delivery.
 - Prolonged, difficult deliveries.
 - Premature bear down (laying) efforts prior to full dilation of the cervix.
 - Ill-nourished and asthenic women.
 - Early gest pregnancy, which greatly increases the intra abdominal pressure before the tissues regain their tone.
 - Repeated childbirth at frequent intervals.
 - Persistent overfilling of the bladder in the puerperium which causes stretching of the pubocervical fascia resulting in inadequate involution
- Symptoms:
 - Sensation of something dropping in that area, backache, difficult passing urine and feces, and excessive vaginal discharge due to vaginitis or the presence of an ulcer

- Treatment: Regular exercise of the pelvic floor, however it is important to refrain from engaging the pelvic floor during the first trimester of pregnancy.

BKS Iyengar's Curative Asanas for Menstrual Disorders

sirsasana sequence, sarvangasana sequence, paschimottanasana, uttanasana, adho muka svanasana, baddha padmasana, yogamudrasana, parvatasana, matsyasana, kurmasana and supta kurmasana, virasana, supta virasana, paryankasana, baddha konasana, upavista konasana, urdva mukha paschimottanasana, yoganidrasana, maricyasana c, aradha matsyendrasana, pasasana, urdva dhanurasana, dwi pada viparita dandasana, savasana, nadi suddi with retention and uddiyana

Case Study

Subject

- Suzie is a 26-year-old, middle class American woman. She works at a marketing firm Monday through Friday and waitresses on the weekends and a couple of nights during the week. She thinks she eats well, as she skips breakfast, eats frozen veggie patties or salads for lunch and frozen or canned food for dinner. She does not have time to exercise so she counts her calories instead to do what she can to “stay fit.” With her demanding work schedule, she is also only able to sleep a maximum of six hours on a good night. A week and a half before she begins menstruating, Suzie feels breast tenderness and cramps in her pelvic region and back, becomes so bloated, she avoids mirrors. Her boyfriend says she becomes crazy a week before her period, very short tempered and emotional. She

spots three days before she begins menstruating and on the first day of her period, her cramps are so bad, she often needs to take the day off from work.

Lifestyle Treatment

Diet

- Suzie needs to replace her frozen meals with whole foods found in the produce section at her grocery store rather than their frozen section. She also needs to incorporate foods that are high in vitamin B and fatty Omega 3s, such as fish, flaxseeds and nuts. Instead of starving herself to consume fewer calories, she needs to eat more healthy foods.

Sleep

- According to Chinese Medicine, Suzie should be getting seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

Stress

- Suzie needs to eliminate her stress, even if it means changing her work schedule. She also needs to incorporate meditation into her daily routine.

Daily Program (30 Minutes)

Dharana

- Breath observation (5 minutes)
 - Any comfortable meditative position
 - Yoni Mudra

- Full Yogic Breathing (5 rounds)
 - Any comfortable meditation position
 - Brahm Mudra

Asana (performed with Ujjayi breaths of five counts for inhalation and five counts for exhalation, engaging the lower abdomen and pelvic floor)

- Vagra swasa breathing (5 breaths)
- Sasankasana (5 breaths)
- Bhujangasana breathing (5 breaths)
- Makarasana (5 breaths)
- Salabhasana breathing (5 breaths)
- Dhanurasana breathing (5 breaths)
- Urdhva prasarita padasana
 - Eka-pada (8 breaths on each leg)
 - Dwi-pada (3 breaths after eka-pada)
- Setu bandhasana breathing (5 breaths)
- Pavana muktasana kriya
 - Eka-pada (9 breaths on each side)
 - Dwi-pada (3 breaths after eka-pada)
- Jathara parivartanasana (5 breaths on each side)
- Veeparrita karani kriya (5 breaths)
- Sarvangasana (10 breaths)
- Supta badda konasana (5 breaths)
- Savasana (3 minutes)

Pranayama

- Bramarie (5 rounds)
 - Any comfortable meditation position

Daily Program (During menstruation)

Dharana

- Breath observation (5 minutes)
 - Any comfortable meditative position
 - Yoni Mudra
- Full Yogic Breathing (5 rounds)
 - Any comfortable meditation position
 - Brahm Mudra

Asana (performed with Ujjayi breaths of five counts for inhalation and five counts for exhalation, engaging the lower abdomen and pelvic floor)

- Vagra swasa breathing (5 breaths)
- Sasankasana (5 breaths)
- Bhujangasana breathing (5 breaths): take it easy
- Makarasana (5 breaths)
- Urdhva prasarita padasana
 - Eka-pada (8 breaths on each leg)
 - Dwi-pada (3 breaths after eka-pada)
- Setu bandhasana breathing (5 breaths)

- Pavana mukhtasana kritya with wall support)
 - Eka-pada (9 breaths on each side)
 - Dwi-pada (3 breaths after eka-pada)
- Jathara parivartanasana (5 breaths on each side)
- Sarvangasana (15 breaths)
- Supta badda konasana (15 breaths)
- Savasana (3 minutes)

Pranayama

- Bramarie (5 rounds)
 - Any comfortable meditation position

Conclusion

It has been proven that women are able to have comfortable and regular menstrual cycles without the use of hormones and toxic medication. With a few lifestyle changes, including diet, sleep, the reduction of stress and asana, our menstrual cycle can be something that we celebrate as it represents the gift of life and femininity. In addition to the effort women put into the above program, our attitudes towards menstruation need to change. We are not our mind however our thoughts influence the way we perceive the world and therefore positive thought generates positive action.

Recourses Used

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