

TREATING MENSTRUAL DISORDERS WITH PLUM FLOWER PRODUCTS

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In the Classical and Traditional labels, Plum Flower offers five classical formulas for treating common menstrual conditions. We can look at them according to the conditions that are treated.

1. PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME. The main symptoms of premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) are irritability, breast distension, headache, and lower abdominal swelling. The severity of one's PMS can be assaged by how many of these symptoms manifest, and for how many days prior to the period. For example, a woman with two or three of these symptoms who has PMS for ten to fourteen days has a more severe case than a woman with one symptom for three days. The cause of three of the symptoms (irritability, breast distension and headache) is due to liver *qi* stagnation. The fourth, lower abdomen distension, also involves deficiency of kidney *qi*.

A woman's body heats up naturally between ovulation and menstruation. If there is any pre-existing stagnation of liver *qi*, this will get worse with the natural heating of the body, because heat aggravates stagnation. The principal of treatment with PMS formulas is to move liver *qi* while dispersing liver heat. This approach has a remarkably high clinical efficacy, with success being obtained in one to four months of treatment. Normally, PMS formulas are given from the onset of ovulation until the first day of the period. If periods are irregular, or the onset on ovulation is unknown, they can generally be started about seven days after the period ends. It is not contraindicated to start them right away after the period, but probably less useful than using a post menstrual blood tonic.

There are two Plum Flower formulas available, the second being a variation of the first. **FREE & EASY WANDERER TEAPILLS** (*Xiao Yao San*) was first recorded by Chen Shiwen in 1080. In the main, the formula moves liver *qi* and blood using Bupleurum *Chai Hu* and Paeonia *Bai Shao*. Tonification of spleen *qi* is required in order to reduce the excess of *qi* in the liver, thus stabilizing the father-child relationship between liver and spleen. This is accomplished with Atractylodes *Bai Zhu*, Poria *Fu Ling*, and Glycyrrhiza *Gan Cao*. Mentha *Bo He* acts to disperse liver heat outwards to the surface.

FREE & EASY WANDERER PLUS TEAPILLS (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*) is an elaboration of *Xiao Yao San* recorded by Wen Sheng in 1860. He added two herbs, Gardenia *Zhi Zi* and Moutan *Mu Dan Pi* to facilitate reduction of liver heat. In my opinion this is a clinically more useful formula for PMS. *Xiao Yao San*, however, is similar to *Xiao Chai Hu Tang*, and can be used for non-gynecological cases of liver stagnation, including chronic hepatitis.

2. MENSTRUAL CRAMPS. Chinese herbal medicine is particularly useful for menstrual cramping (dysmenorrhea). The treatment principle is to activate blood and dispel blood stasis, and many Chinese herbs have been discovered for blood stasis causing menstrual cramping. The underlying condition usually involves liver *qi* stagnation, and it is not uncommon for women who suffer cramping to also have premenstrual syndrome. Another common factor in creating menstrual cramping is exogenous cold entering the uterus during menses or childbirth. In these cases, herbs or formulas need to be used that dispel cold and warm the uterus. An underlying deficiency of kidney *yang* can also lead to dysmenorrhea, and needs to be treated with an additional formula to boost kidney *yang*.

Formulas for menstrual cramps can be taken for week prior to menses, or during the onset of the period only in order to relieve pain and discharge clots. In stubborn case of dysmenorrhea, or in the case of small uterine fibroids, the formulas can be taken throughout the month. Once cramping is over, it is best to discontinue the formulas during menses so as not to aggravate excessive bleeding.

Plum Flower offers four products for menstrual cramping. **CALM IN THE SEA OF LIFE TEAPILLS** (*Tong Jing Wan*) is an excellent general formula. Of the ten herbs in the formula, seven are strong blood invigorators, including Prunus Persica *Tao Ren*, Salvia *Dan Shen*, Typha *Pu Huang*, Corydalis *Yan Hu Suo*, Ligusticum *Chuan Xiong* and Carthamus *Hong Hua*. The inclusion of Cyperus *Xiang Fu* activates the flow of *qi* from the liver to the uterus, along the liver channel, while Lindera *Wu Yao* warms the liver channel and uterus. This formula can also be used for small uterine fibroids.

STASIS IN THE LOWER PALACE TEAPILLS (*Shao Fu Zhu Yu Wan*) was recorded by Wang Qingren in 1830. Using strong blood invigorators (Typha *Pu Huang*, Troglodytes *Chao Wu Ling Zhi*, Commiphora Myrrha *Mo Yao*) he also added three warming herbs (Cinnamomum *Gui Zhi*, Foeniculum *Chao Xiao Hui Xiang*, and Zingiberis *Chao Gan Jiang*). This allows the formula to be useful for stubborn cases aggravated by exogenous cold that has entered the uterus.

TAO HONG SI WU TANG TEAPILLS (*Tao Hong Si Wu Tang Wan*) is used for menstrual cramping due to blood deficiency. A simple formula, it takes the basic blood building formula **FOUR SUBSTANCES FOR WOMEN TEAPILLS** (*Si Wu Tang Wan*) and adds two blood moving herbs, Persica *Tao Ren* and Carthamus *Hong Hua*. Although less commonly used than the other formulas mentioned above, it is a useful blood tonic when there are mild episodes of cramping or clots. The formula was recorded by Wu Qian in 1742.

CINNAMON & PORIA TEAPILLS (*Gui Zhi Fu Ling Wan*) was recorded by Zhong Zhongjing in 220 AD. While warming the uterus with Cinnamomum *Gui Zhi*, the formula moves blood with Paeonia *Chi Shao* and Prunus Persica *Tao Ren*. Besides being used for menstrual cramps, it has also been used following childbirth for retention of the lochia or placenta. The Japanese, in the Kanpo tradition, will also use it for ovarian cyst.

Other gynecological formulas in the Plum Flower line include **WARM CYCLE TEAPILLS** (*Wen Jing Tang Wan*) for infertility and amenorrhea, **WOMEN'S PRECIOUS TEAPILLS** (*Ba Zhen Tang Wan*) for tonification of *qi* and blood following the period or childbirth, **CHIEN CHIN CHIH TAI WAN** (*Qian Jin Zhi Dai Wan*) for leukorrhea, **TWO IMMORTALS TEAPILLS** (*Er Xian Tang Wan*) for menopausal disorder, **QI BAO MEI RAN DAN** for hair loss, and **EIGHT RIGHTEOUS TEAPILLS** (*Ba Zheng San*) for bladder infections.

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