

Health & Fitness

Natural relief for menstrual cramps



Instead of using painkillers every time, find the source of the menstrual cramps and opt for healthier alternatives to alleviate the pain.

Any woman with menstrual cramps knows how dreadful getting a period can be. Dysmenorrhea, the medical term for menstrual cramps, can be intense at times and may radiate to the thighs or lower back. It can even cause nausea, dizziness and vomiting.

Menstrual cramps are generally caused by contractions in the uterus throughout the menstrual cycle. If individuals experience severe pain, they should see a medical or naturopathic doctor to rule out underlying causes such as endometriosis, uterine fibroids and pelvic inflammatory disease.

According to Registered Naturopathic Doctor Ardyce Yik from Integrated Medicine Institute (IMI), while pain reliever such as aspirin is the most common treatment for menstrual cramps, it only treats the symptoms rather than the source of the problem. Pain relievers may also come with side effects, especially when taken regularly.

Instead of resorting to painkillers, Doctor Yik says that there are in fact a wide range of natural remedies women can use to alleviate menstrual cramps. The most common one include putting a heating pad or warm packs on the abdomen for 15 to 20 minutes while doing deep breathing exercises, since warmth helps to relax muscles and improve circulation.

Also, consider incorporating more magnesium in diets. A nutrient that can help ease muscle cramps, magnesium is found in many foods such as nuts, seeds, beans, leafy vegetables and whole grains. It is also available in homeopathic form and supplement form. For those

unsure what type of magnesium or dosage is appropriate, consult a naturopathic or homeopathic doctor.

In keeping with the traditions of Chinese medicine, try using ginger root to relieve cramps by improving circulation and minimizing "qi stagnation", a stagnation of the traditional Chinese notion of bodily energy which practitioners believe is related to menstrual cramps. The easiest way will be to make ginger root tea: add 3 to 6 slices of ginger root into cold water, bring to a boil and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, to relieve pain in the lower back and pelvic areas, consider seeking a naturopathic doctor, osteopath or chiropractor for a lumbosacral mobilization session before, or during your period. (www.imi.com.hk)



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