Women's Health

Fibrocystic Breast Disease

This causes benign lumps to appear in the breast. **Dr John Myers recommended a treatment in 1976 which has proved highly effective** (but somewhat complex). This involves using a large cotton swab with iodine (Lugol's iodine is best, potassium iodide will not work) and to swab the vaginal and cervical area (it can be rubbed directly onto the breast but seems to work better internally). Repeat once or twice weekly. Usually, the lumps were gone or a small painless remnant remained after 5 to 6 treatments, although in a severe case 12 weeks was needed.

Sometimes, this can be a bit fiddly to do. An alternative is using 5% Lugol's iodine (available from Amazon). Use 2 drops of 5% Lugol's Iodine in a glass of water daily: this gives 5mg iodine daily which is thought to reverse 90% of fibrocystic breast disease. This can take up to 6 months. It is useful to get a thyroid blood test if the treatment is prolonged as iodine can sometimes affect the thyroid function. Iodine is very safe and has numerous benefits (protection against infection and reducing toxic load).

Iodine also has a protective effect against breast cancer; it combines to form iodolactone which is toxic to breast cancer cells.

Breast Pain

Avoid milk

Milk contains a cocktail of hormones and chemicals. These are present in much higher concentration in today's milk. This is because of modern farming designed to get cows to produce the maximum quantity of milk. A proportion of milk usually comes from pregnant cows and hormone levels can be 5-30 times higher than in the past. Some studies have shown a link between milk consumption and breast cancer. Hormones in milk (notably IGF1) are known to promote breast cancer in animals. It therefore makes sense to keep beef and milk products low in your diet, especially if you have breast problems.

Avoid coffee – Coffee seems to have a direct effect on the breast in some women (probably due to the chemical methylxanthine). Tea, cola and chocolate usually have a lesser effect.

Eat **flaxseed** –ideally 2 tablespoonfuls of ground flaxseed daily (this also reduces the risk of precancerous breast lesions in one study).

Increase essential fats – The breast is composed of fat. Poor quality dietary fat means poor quality breast fat. The normal advice is to take **evening primrose oil.** This can be effective, however evening primrose oil is an Omega 6 fat, as is starflower oil. But sometimes the deficiency is of an Omega 3 fat or a combined deficiency of Omega 3 and 6.

Omega 3 fats come from **oily fish** (herring, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, pilchards and wild salmon) and from some **seeds,** particularly flaxseed. If you're not eating these, then add them to the diet or consider a supplement of flaxseed oil or fish oils as these are high in Omega 3 fats. Omega 6 fats can be found in sunflower seeds, most nuts and cold-pressed safflower or sunflower seed oil. Hemp seed oil contains a mix of Omega 3 and 6.

As well as taking essential fats, avoid harmful fats. These come in two groups. The first and most harmful are the **hydrogenated fats**. These occur whenever a fat is heated and the key foods to avoid are fried foods, margarines and supermarket vegetable oils (which are all pre-heated). For instance, sunflower oil from your supermarket will be toxic (full of hydrogenated fats) whereas cool-pressed sunflower oil from your health food shop is a good source of essential fats (but don't heat it). For cooking, the best oils are olive oil, butter or coconut oil.

B Vitamins and Magnesium – These can sometimes help. See below. (Note these are reduced by the contraceptive pill).

Vitamin E – Studies have shown supplementing this vitamin is useful in reducing breast tenderness. Using 600iu for 3 months gave a marked improvement in 85% of women. Note natural Vitamin E (mixed tocopherols or d alpha tocopherol) were used. Synthetic Vitamin E (dl alpha tocopherol) was ineffective.

Hormone Friendly Diet – see below

Be careful of bras and anti-perspirants – Wearing a bra for more than 12 hours may prevent lymphatic drainage and hence toxins cannot leave the breast area. Anti-perspirants have the same effect.

Pre-menstrual Tension

B Vitamins and Magnesium – B Vitamins and magnesium work together. Sometimes Vitamin B6 alone will help but combinations of B vitamins usually work better. B6 in doses of 50 to 250mg daily improves mood swings and leg swelling. Aim for a multi-B vitamin with at least 10 to 50 mg of the major B vitamins (vitamins B1, B2, B3, B6) and 200 to 300mg of magnesium twice daily **Note:** The pill reduces B6 and other nutrients. (One study of women taking 400mg magnesium daily found they had 95% less breast pain and 89% less nervous tension and 43% less headaches). Magnesium tends to be lowest before periods.

Avoid Sugar – This is because the sugar feeds fungi in the gut, such as candida. The clue here is sugar craving. These fungi have oestrogen receptors and multiply when hormone levels are high as happens before periods. If this happens to you then avoid all sugars for two weeks before a period and during. Sometimes total avoidance is necessary.

Add essential fats and avoid bad fat (see above). **Evening primrose oil** seems especially beneficial.

Vitamin E (ideally mixed tocopherols) has been found to significantly improve symptoms: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3302248/

A trial of **L tryptophan**, in 71 women found it significantly improved symptoms. The researchers gave 2 grams three times a day. This is a big dose. However, 1500 mg twice daily seems to work as well.

Progesterone. Low progesterone can be a cause of PMT. This is more likely with irregular menstruation.

Good nutrition is critical to producing enough progesterone. For instance, Vitamin B6 helps increase progesterone. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17478435/#:~:text=Am%20J%20Epidemiol,Epub%202007%20May%202.

Vitamin C has also been shown to increase progesterone. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12909517/#:~:text=Fertil%20Steril,0282(03)00657%2D5.

Other nutrients such as zinc, magnesium, Vitamin E and L arginine can help increase progesterone.

Smoking: Avoid as increases the risk two to three-fold.

Hormone Friendly Diet

Cut coffee and tea – one study showed women who had more than 4 cups had five times as much PMT.

Herbs: Several studies of Agnus castus (chaste tree extract) have shown big reductions in PMT. The dose used has been between 4mg daily and 20mg daily (equivalent to between 40 and 180mg of dried herb).

One reason for PMT is poor ability to break down oestrogens. Supporting the liver with milk thistle and alpha lipoic acid may help in this situation.

Iodine is often low in PMT and is easy and cheap to supplement (see above for how to use iodine).

Heavy or Painful Periods

Vitamins A and K –

Research in 1977 on a group of 40 women with heavy periods found that giving 50,000 IU of Vitamin **A found periods went back to normal in 23 (52.5%)** and were substantially improved in 14 (35%) – so 37 out 40 did well. Note this is a high dose of Vitamin A and should not be taken in pregnancy or for those trying to get pregnant (maximum10,000 in these situations). You would normally need several capsules of Vitamin A to reach this dose.

For clots Vitamin K is usually helpful (also helps easy bruising).

Women eating high amounts of carotene (a metabolite of Vitamin A) were studied at Rutgers University, New Jersey. They had a diet high in raw vegetables, particularly carrots. These women commonly lost their periods altogether though they were in excellent health. Carotene is found in carrots, spinach and green vegetables.

Vitamin B12: Dr Joseph Chandy, an expert in B12 found that many of his patients with heavy bleeding were completely cured by vitamin B12 replacement therapy (from his book "Vitamin B12 deficiency in Clinical practice"). It is not clear how quickly this happened.

Magnesium: this reduces muscle spasm. Use 200 to 300mg twice daily. (Magnesium levels go down with alcohol, salt, fizzy drinks, stress, exercise, the pill and acid-blocking drugs).

Vitamin B1 (Thiamine): a study of 556 girls aged 12 to 21 who took 100mg a day of thiamine found 87% had complete relief, 8% were greatly improved and 5% were no better. This is a high but completely safe dose of thiamine and **the results are very impressive**:
http://europepmc.org/article/med/8935744

Agnus Castus: this helped heavy periods in 66% of cases.

Menstrual Cramps: Using Omega 3 fats such as fish oils and cod liver oil can help. They reduce inflammation. It typically takes about 3 cycles to be effective then the dose can be lowered.

Bioflavinoids and Vitamin C – The old-fashioned advice for heavy periods was to suck on a lemon. This was researched by a Dr Clemetson who found that citrus bioflavonoids (found in the pith of citrus fruits) and Vitamin C taken over 3 to 4 months reduced bleeding. He suggested eating 3 oranges daily and eating plenty of the pith. Bioflavonoids and Vitamin C are usually available in health food shops.

In a study of heavy bleeding treated by the herb agnus castus for between 5 and 24 months, bleeding was reduced from 8 days to 5 days using 45 drops of tincture per day.

Pycnogenol –studies at the Suzuki School of Medicine in Japan found giving 30-60mg of pycnogenol (maritime pine bark) beginning 2 weeks before periods reduced or stopped period pains in 70% of women.

Iron – also helps lessen blood flow.

Vitamin E: 200IU of vitamin E twice daily from 2 days before the period until day 3 of the periods reduced symptoms.

Periods are highly sensitive to poor nutrition and the **hormone friendly Diet** will help**.**

Borderline hypothyroidism is another cause of abnormal periods.

B Vitamins and Magnesium – as above

Essential fats – as above

Ginger – women who used 1/8 teaspoonful of powdered ginger reduced their bleeding by 50% and reduced their period pains. Another group who used the same dose of ginger 3 times daily from the day before their periods reduced their pain score from 8 out of 10 to 6 in the first month and to 3 in the second month.

Exercise – helps with period pains. Cross country runners have been known to lose their periods.

Avoid smoking – This has been shown to increase period pains.

In **Chinese medicine** they found reflex points in the feet influenced the uterus and that some women would stop bleeding from the womb after putting their feet in ice cold water.

Menopause

This is a common and difficult problem. HRT can help but is highly addictive and can be a nightmare to come off because of rebound symptoms. It also increases the risk of breast cancer. Bio-identical hormones (more natural hormones) may be a safer bet but are not widely available.

Borderline hypothyroidism can increase the severity of menopausal symptoms, especially flushes.

Isoflavinoids can be very useful for menopausal symptoms – these are natural oestrogen-like substances derived from soya. They are widely available at health food shops.

Vitamin E Useful for flushes. See breast pain section for dose. Start with 400IU daily increasing to 1600 IU daily as necessary.

Vitamin D 3000 -10,000IU daily **–**reduce when symptoms improve.

Magnesium – many of the symptoms of magnesium deficiency and the menopause overlap. Aim to take 200-300mg twice daily.

Hormone Friendly Diet

A 2022 study found those eating the highest amount of ultra-processed food (UPFs) had the most intense flushes and night sweats. The worst of these foods were sugar-sweetened drinks and sausages. Those eating less UPFs and more vegetables had less symptoms.

Herbs – A number of herbal remedies have been found helpful for menopausal symptoms including dong quai, red clover, black cohosh, blue cohosh, wild spikenard and black snakeroot and fennel. All have published studies supporting their use in the menopause. However, herbalist Harold Gaier says he has found rhubarb root to be the most effective herbal remedy. It has a number of useful properties (reduces effect of oestrogen withdrawal, alleviates symptoms of menopause, corrects loss of periods, reduces painful periods). One useful preparation is Phytoestrol N, a standardized combination of 4mg rhubarb root with 90mg hops – this has been in use for 60 years with no known side effects.

Pycnogenol – an Italian study of menopausal women given pycnogenol 100mg daily for 8 weeks (a high dose) found that hot flushes, night sweats, mood swings, loss of libido, irregular periods and vaginal dryness were reduced in those taking the supplement but not in those taking placebo.

NADH – this naturally occurring substance reduces flushes and increases libido. Use 10mg daily.

Flattening the Glucose Curve – spikes of glucose after sugary foods ad drinks, processed foods and refined carbohydrates can increase menopausal symptoms and worsen insomnia. There are a number of simple tricks to avoid these spikes in sugar levels (see flattening the glucose curve in the diabetic leaflet for more information).

Oestrogen Excess – Contrary to popular belief, oestrogen can be a problem during the menopause. The ratio of oestrogen to progesterone is critical with a high ratio associated with menopausal symptoms Progesterone levels plummet around the menopause but oestrogen can remain high: it is still produced in significant quantities from midline fat (obese post menopausal women can produce more oestrogen than slim pre-menopausal women) and from the adrenal glands. A drop in progesterone or change in the ratio can lead to sleep disturbances, anxiety and brain fog. A major source of oestrogen is milk. Sugar also increases oestrogen. Xeno-oestrogens in the environment also cause problems (see below). Phyto-oestrogens from many vegetables (green vegetables, cruciferous vegetables like broccoli) are helpful as they block the oestrogen receptors Exercise helps eliminate oestrogen. Fibre increases its excretion from the gut. Foods including flaxseed, soy products and whole grains balance it. Reducing caffeine, sugar and alcohol help with this balance. (See oestrogen dominance leaflet for more details)

Other - A quick method to control hot flushes which often helps is to rub a spot on the temples gently for about 20 seconds on both sides, first with the eyes open and then with the eyes closed. To find the spot, go to the top of ear and the go up about three finger breadths and slightly forward to where there is a little dip in the bone.

Hormone Friendly Diet

A lot of female problems are thought to be linked to an **excess of oestrogen**. The world is now full of oestrogen-like substances and male fish, seagulls and even alligators are becoming feminised. Hormone related cancers are increasing in men and women (breast, testicular and prostate). Many substances act like oestrogens including **pesticides, plastics and many chemicals.** Oestrogens are also found in water (derived from the contraceptive pill). After a pesticide accident in Seveso, Italy, only females were born for 12 years. Pesticides are stored in our fat and accumulate. Organic food may therefore help. The other major oestrogen-like substances are **plastics**. So avoid plastics on food, especially fatty foods, and do not cover with plastic while microwaving. The pill also contains oestrogen.

Note that **irregular periods** are strongly linked with a nutritionally poor diet although they are more common when periods start (as ovulation is irregular) and near the menopause.

Be very wary of milk which contains powerful hormones and chemical messengers such as prolactin and insulin growth factors 1 and 2 which increase the risk of a number of diseases, including breast, ovarian and prostate cancer and diabetes.

Eat plenty of fresh vegetables daily.

Eat at least two pieces of fresh fruit daily.

Drink about six glasses of filtered water daily.

Eat unprocessed organic food as much as possible.

Include beans, lentils and soya in the diet. (A lot of soya is genetically modified so check the label).

Eating one ounce of flaxseed daily has been shown to improve hormone levels.

Have wholegrains such as brown rice, oats, rye and corn avoiding refined white flour.

Eat a heaped tablespoonful of ground seeds or cold pressed seed oil daily. Try organic flaxseeds which contain a substance, lignin, which helps to regulates hormone levels.

Have plenty of soya, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower which all contain substances which lower oestrogen levels.

Avoid excess animal meat and fat, (both meat and milk may have hormone residues in it), fried food, and hydrogenated fats.

Avoid sugar as much as possible as this increases oestrogen.

Minimise tea, coffee, cola and alcohol.

Other Conditions

A pattern is emerging of a large increase in hormone-related diseases. These include polycystic ovary syndrome and endometriosis and many other hormonal issues. Almost certainly this is because of the increase in hormone-like substances (gender benders) in the environment. A good diet and measures to increase excretion of toxic substances will help (see separate leaflets on polycystic ovary and endometriosis).