



# MENSTRUAL PAIN & LIFESTYLE

- The number one cause of why women younger than 30 absent themselves from work or school.
- 50% or more women in their childbearing years suffer from menstrual pain.
- Poor lifestyle habits such as being sedentary, smoking, imbalanced alcohol consumption, and uncontrolled dieting aggravate.

Holistic lifestyle approaches to decrease or prevent menstrual pain:

- **Stress reduction:** relaxation might help relax the pelvis and low back muscles. (Of course, the most holistic approach to stress reduction involves meditation techniques, like Kriya yoga.)
- Increased **exercise:** improves blood flow to the uterus and creates optimal pelvic musculature.
- Healthy **diet**, avoiding fast and highly processed foods high in salt/sugar/fat, emphasizing a diet rich in veggies, whole grains, fresh fruits, nuts, seeds, and some chicken and fish.
- Striving toward a healthy weight by staying physically active, minimizing and managing stress well, and eating healthy
- Not smoking
- Maintaining optimal **digestion:** irregular bowel habits may be correlated with menstrual pain. The healthier your diet, the healthier your bowels.
- Good **posture** and spinal alignment may decrease the tendency toward menstrual cramps
- Avoiding tampons, they might make menstrual cramps worse
- Paying attention to **food allergies** that might contribute to increased water retention, gas and bloating, which might increase pelvic congestion
- Avoiding an IUD which might make menstrual cramps worse

*Women's Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine: alternative therapies and Integrative Medicine* – Tori Hudson, N.D.



### Dietary Changes:

- Foods that seem to help diminish menstrual cramps are foods that increase the antispasmodic prostaglandins. Certain **fish**, including salmon, tuna, and halibut contain linolenic acid, a healthy fatty acid that helps to relax muscles with the production of a different prostaglandin. **Nuts and seeds, especially flax, pumpkin, sesame and sunflower** seeds can improve these prostaglandins. **Whole grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits** all can promote regularity and normal body functioning.
- Avoid foods high in arachidonic acid. This is the fat the body uses to produce the series-2 prostaglandins which are the ones that cause muscle and uterine contractions. These foods include: dairy products, saturated fats and animal foods.
- Salt can aggravate menstrual cramps as this will increase fluid retention and worsen bloating.
- Sugar might interfere with the absorption and metabolism of some of the B vitamins and minerals. Nutritional imbalances can lead to difficulty in muscle functioning and lead to muscle spasms.