

Menstrual problems

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Symptoms

Symptoms and conditions vary and include no periods, heavy periods, frequent or infrequent periods, or early menopause. Headaches, breast pain, bloating and low stomach cramps, as well as hot flushes, tiredness, irritability and depression can occur where there are hormonal disturbances.

Causes

Conditions associated with menstrual problems may be due to multiple causes, which need diagnosis by a doctor. Causes can be hormonal, HIV infection itself or a [side effect](#) [1]An unwanted effect caused by the administration of drugs. Onset may be sudden or develop over time. of HIV [antiviral](#) [2]A medication or substance which is active against one or more viruses. May include anti-HIV drugs, but these are more accurately termed antiretrovirals. drugs.

Complementary & Supportive Therapy

Loss of period : The herb *Vitex agnus castus* , better known as chaste tree, has been found to be effective in the treatment of premenstrual disorders. False unicorn root (*Chamaelirium luteum*) contains [steroid](#) [3]A substance which is structurally similar to human sex hormones which is used for therapeutic purposes due to its anti-inflammatory effects. -like hormone substances (called saponins), which account for its reputation as a tonic for the ovaries and uterus. Herbalists use false unicorn root to encourage fertility in women and to treat impotence in men. This herb is also used to treat disturbances of menstruation accompanied by a bearing- down sensation. False unicorn root is sometimes confused with true unicorn root (both plants have been called 'Blazing Star'). True unicorn root (*Aletris farinosa*) contains a steroid-like hormone (diogsgenin) that is thought to have oestrogenic properties (providing an effect similar to natural oestrogens). Rue (*Ruta graveolens*) is a traditional therapy used when the menstrual period becomes absent.

PMS: Evening primrose oil (*Oenothera biennis*) may be used to treat headaches, depression, irritability, breast pain and bloating related to premenstrual syndrome. The Chinese herb dong quai (*Angelica sinensis*) has been traditionally used as a tonic for the uterus and the treatment of menstrual problems. Iron supplements are sometimes recommended during heavy periods to replace iron lost during menstruation.

Menopause: Black cohosh herb (*Cimifuga racemosa*) has been clinically proven to reduce the symptoms of menopausal hot flushes. Soy supplements (phytoestrogens) may also help. Acupuncture, acupressure as well as relaxation and stress management techniques may also be helpful. Talk with your doctor about the possibility that HIV antiviral drugs are contributing to your menstrual problems, and discuss ways of reducing the impact of related side effects. A switch in your HIV antiviral drugs may help if your doctor determines this is appropriate for you. Depending on the type of menstrual problem other specific treatments will be prescribed.

Special Precautions & Considerations

- Please note that black cohosh (*Cimifuga racemosa*) has, in some cases been associated with [liver](#) [4]A large organ, located in the upper right abdomen, which assists in digestion by metabolising carbohydrates, fats and proteins, stores vitamins and minerals, produces amino acids, bile and cholesterol, and removes toxins from the blood. failure, and should be used under supervision in consultation with your doctor, health care provider or professional herbalist.
- Many herbals treatments for menstrual problems are specialised and should only be taken under supervision, in consultation with a professional herbalist.

Rue should not be used during pregnancy, as it is strongly stimulating to the uterus and traditionally has been used to induce miscarriage.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/469>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/123>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/354>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/102>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/managing-side-effects/headache>

[6] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/managing-side-effects/managing-common-side-effects>

[7] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/managing-side-effects/glossary-of-terms>