Menstrual Cycle Phases as a Guide to Treatment

with Michael Peluso, M.S., L.Ac.
Work With the Natural Cycle

1. Day 7
   - Engender New Blood
   - Blood & Yin
   - Menses

2. Day 14
   - Yang Qi Warms
   - Yang & Qi

3. Day 21
   - Heart/Liver Qi Send Blood to Fill the Uterus
   - LIVER

4. LIVER
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Female Physiology Arc

- “In women, the main [thing] is Blood”
- Birth/Maturation of the Spleen/Stomach
- Menarche (arrival of Tian Gui)
- Decline of Spleen/Stomach
- Menopause (ceasing of Tian Gui)
Female Anatomy in TCM

- Bao Gong
- Bao Mai
- Bao Luo
- Tian Gui
Female Physiology in TCM

• Monthly Cycle

• Normal 28 days (lunar cycle) 5-7 days Increase in vaginal secretions (clear) and slight discomfort is normal; significant pain as in mittelschmerz or severe cramping is not.

• PMS symptoms which are not pronounced and disappear upon menstruation are not considered particularly pathological.

• Healthy women should have little to no symptoms
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

Day 1
Day 7
Day 14
Day 21
Day 28

Blood & Yin
Yang & Qi
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

- Day 1
- Day 7: Blood & Yin
- Day 14
- Day 21: Yang & Qi
- Day 28

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Menstrual Cycle Physiology

Day 1
Day 7
Day 14
Day 21
Day 28

Blood
Blood & Yin
Yang & Qi
Blood
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

Day 1
Day 7
Day 14
Day 21
Day 28

Blood
Blood & Yin
Yang & Qi
Yin
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

Day 1
Day 7
Day 14
Day 21
Day 28

Blood & Yin
Blood
Yin
Yang & Qi
Yang

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Menstrual Cycle Physiology

Day 1
Day 7
Day 14
Day 21
Day 28

Blood
Yin
Yang
Qi

Blood & Yin
Yang & Qi
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. Ovulation
   - Day 14
   - Qi, Yin & Yang
   - Engender New Blood

2. Yang Qi Warms
   - Day 21
   - Heart/Liver Qi
   - Send Blood to Fill the Uterus

3. Menstruation
   - Day 1
   - Day 28
   - Qi, Yin & Yang

4. Menses
   - Day 7
   - Blood & Yin
   - Yang & Qi
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. Day 7
   - Engender New Blood

2. Day 14
   - Yang Qi Warms
   - Heart/Liver Qi

3. Day 21
   - Menses
   - Send Blood to Fill the Uterus

4. Day 28
   - Blood & Yin
   - Yang & Qi
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. Day 7
   - Engender New Blood

2. Day 14
   - Yang Qi Warms

3. Day 21
   - Heart/Liver Qi Send Blood to Fill the Uterus

4. Menses
   - LIVER

Blood & Yin

Yang & Qi

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Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. Day 14
   - Engelnder New Blood

2. Day 21
   - Yang Qi Warms
   - Heart/Liver Qi Send Blood to Fill the Uterus

3. LIVER/BLOOD
   - Menses

4. LIVER
   - Blood & Yin
   - Yang & Qi
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. HT, SP, KD YIN
   - Day 14: Yang Qi Warms
2. Day 7: Engender New Blood
3. Day 21: Heart/Liver Qi Send Blood to Fill the Uterus
4. LIVER/BLOOD
   - Menses

Blood & Yin

Yang & Qi

LIVER
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. HT, SP, KD YIN
   - Engender New Blood

2. LIVER
   - Yang Qi Warms

3. LIVER/BLOOD
   - Heart/Liver Qi Send Blood to Fill the Uterus

4. Day 7
   - Menses
   - Blood & Yin
   - Yang & Qi

Day 21
   - LIVER/BLOOD
   - LIVER
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. HT, SP, KD YIN
   - Engender New Blood
   - Day 7

2. HT, SP, KD YANG
   - Yang Qi Warms
   - Day 21

3. LIVER/BLOOD
   - Heart/Liver Qi Send Blood to Fill the Uterus

4. LIVER
   - Menses
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

1. HT, SP, KD YIN
   - LIVER
   - Engender New Blood
   - Day 7
   - Menses

2. HT, SP, KD YANG
   - LIVER
   - Yang Qi Warms
   - Day 21
   - Heart/Liver Qi Send Blood to Fill the Uterus

3. LIVER/BLOOD
   - LIVER/QI

4. LIVER
   - LIVER/BLOOD
   - LIVER/QI
Menstrual Cycle Physiology
Phase One

Day 7

Day 14

Yin
Phase One
Yin Phase

- This is after menses stop and prior to ovulation.
- Treatment should be focused on Nourishing Yin and Blood.
Phase One
Yin Phase

• Pay attention to the Liver

• Common problems are: Qi, Yin/Blood Vacuity

• Prolonged Phase 1: Yin or Yang Vacuity, Blood Stasis

• Short: Heat (Vacuity or Depressive)
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

- **Day 1**
  - Blood
  - Yin

- **Day 7**
  - Blood & Yin

- **Day 14**
  - Yang & Qi

- **Day 21**
  - Yang
  - Qi

- **Day 28**
  - Blood & Yin
  - Yin
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

Ovulation
Menstrual Cycle Physiology
Treating Ovulatory Diseases

- Treatment should begin 3-4 days prior to ovulation. ~Days 9-10.
- Potential exacerbation of Damp
- Pay attention to the Liver
Menstrual Cycle Physiology
Phase Two

Day 14

Yang

Day 21
Phase Two
Yang Phase

- Treatment should focus on Warming Yang
- Pay attention to the Liver
- Common problems are: Cold and Qi Stagnation/Depressive Heat
- See Sawtooth BBT pattern (LV/Depressive Heat + SP/KD Yang Vacuity, Blood Stasis)
Menstrual Cycle Physiology

Phase 3

Day 21

Day 28

Qi
Phase Three
Qi Phase

- Treatment should be focused on Rectifying the Qi
- Pay attention to the Liver
- Common problems are: Qi Stagnation, Heat, Cold, Blood Stasis
Menstrual Cycle Physiology
Phase Four

Day 1

Day 7

Blood
Phase Four
Blood Phase (Menstrual Cycle)

- We don’t typically treat during the menstrual cycle.
- Unless there is a disease of the menstrual cycle.

- Profuse Menstruation
- Painful Menstruation
- Acute/serious conditions
Major Causes of Menstrual Diseases

- Affect Disorders (Emotions)
- Activity/Inactivity/Lifestyle
- Undisciplined Eating & Drinking
- Age/Constitution
Heart

Lung

Liver

Spleen

Kidney Yin

Kidney Yang

Affect Damage

Age

Environment

Faulty Diet

Affect Damage
Menstrual Disease Categories

- Problems of timing (early/late/erratic)
- Problems of volume (scanty or heavy)
- Problems of pain and discomfort
Pathophysiology of Bleeding

• In Chinese medicine, there are only 4 causes/mechanisms of pathological bleeding.

1. Trauma (physical)

2. Qi Vacuity

3. Heat

4. Blood Stasis
Pathophysiology of Bleeding

• In Gynecology, we only concern ourselves with 3 causes/mechanisms.

  1. Qi Vacuity
  2. Heat
  3. Blood Stasis
Pathophysiology of Pain

• In Chinese medicine it is said:

“If there is pain, there is no free flow; if there is free flow, there is not pain”

Tong Ze Bu Tong; Bu Tong Ze Tong
Pathophysiology of Pain

• Free Flow of What?

  1. Qi
  2. Blood
  3. Fluids
Pathophysiology of Pain

- What inhibits the free flow of Qi, Blood and Fluids, especially in gynecological disorders?
  1. Qi Stagnation
  2. Blood Stasis
  3. Cold
  4. Dampness/Phlegm
More Tools of the Trade
BBT Chart - Not Just for Fertility!
BBT Chart
As a Tool for Treating Menstrual Diseases

- Does not determine the patterns, must still rely on appropriate S/S, tongue and pulse.

- Does suggest *most likely* patterns to explore

- Does help with *timing* of treatment
BBT Chart
Cervical Fluid (Mucus)

Egg-White Cervical Mucus
Egg-White Cervical Mucus
Indication of Ovulation

- Egg-white cervical mucus is a fairly reliable indicator of ovulation.
- With BBT, helps establish position/day within the cycle.
What to Treat During Phase One
Treatment During Phase One

Yin Phase: Nourish Yin & Blood

- This is after menses stop and prior to ovulation.
• If the patient is presenting with pronounced signs and symptoms of Qi + Yin/Blood vacuity such as:
**Treatment During Phase One**

Yin Phase

- Fatigue
- Heart palpitations
- Sleep disturbances
- Anxiety
- Memory problems
- other S/S of Qi and Yin/Blood vacuity
• Be mindful when supplementing during this time if your patient is overweight and has dampness/phlegm.

• This is the Yin Phase of the cycle, so in addition/in lieu of strong supplementation, medicinals for drying dampness may need to be added.

• Damp pathologies are often exacerbated at mid-cycle when Yin reaches its extreme before transforming into Yang.
Further, be mindful of the Liver during phases of supplementation at the end of the menses the Liver can also relatively Blood vacuous and prone to depression.

This means that Spleen (Blood + Qi) and KD (Yin) supplementing medicinals should be combined with medicinals which course the Liver and rectify the Qi.
Treatment During Phase One

Yin Phase

- This is especially important as you get closer to the mid-cycle Yin/Yang transformation.
Representative Menstrual Diseases Treated During Phase One
Early Menstruation Due to Early Ovulation

- Ovulation is the transformation of Yin to Yang.
- During Phase 1, nourishing Yin and Blood are the correct treatment principles.

- Early ovulation (generally) = early menstruation
- Using BBT we can see if early menstruation is due to early ovulation.
- If it is, we know that treatment prior to ovulation will produce the optimal result.
BBT Chart - Early Ovulation
Early Menstruation Due to Early Ovulation

- Early Menstruation has 3 primary causes in Chinese medicine:

- 3 Primary Patterns

  - Qi Vacuity (Spleen or Kidney)
  - Heat (Replete or Vacuous)
  - Blood Stasis
Early Menstruation Due to Early Ovulation

- Early Menstruation has 3 primary causes in Chinese medicine:

  - Yin/Blood Vacuity + Vacuity Heat
  - Liver Depression Qi Stagnation + Depressive Heat

Early menstruation **due to early ovulation** is generally caused by:

- Yin/Blood Vacuity + Vacuity Heat
- Liver Depression Qi Stagnation + Depressive Heat
Early Menstruation Due to Luteal Phase Defect (presenting as KD Yang vacuity)

- More common cause of early menstruation in women late 30’s and into their 40’s.
- Treatment should focus on Supplementing Spleen, Warming Yang and coursing the Liver.
Luteal Phase Defect
Early Menstruation
Ovulation occurs on time but luteal phase is short and menses arrives early.

Treatment should begin around Day 14 and *can* go through day 28.
Early Menstruation Due to Luteal Phase Defect
(presenting as KD Yang vacuity)

- But wait a minute. Yang vacuity isn’t a cause of pathological bleeding...
- SP Qi Vacuity → KD Yang Vacuity
- They are a continuum and BOTH exist.
Saw Tooth Pattern
Early Menstruation

<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Basal body temperature (°C)

CM Type
- Intercourse

CM types: P - period; D - dry; S - sticky; E - egg whites
Representative Diseases During Ovulation

- Day 1
- Day 2
- Day 7
- Day 14
- Day 16
- Day 21
- Day 28
- Day 28
Treatment for Ovulatory Pain

- Treatment should begin 3-4 days prior to ovulation. ~Days 9-10.

**Mittelschmerz**
- usually a fixed pain indicating Blood stasis.
- add appropriate medicinals at this time

Pay attention to the Liver
Treatment for Ovulatory Bleeding/Spotting

- Treatment should begin 3-4 days prior to ovulation. ~Days 9-10.

Bleeding/Spotting
- same root causes as pathological bleeding
- damp/phlegm heat

Pay attention to the Liver
What to Treat During Phase 3

Day 21

Day 28

Qi
Treatment During Phase Three
Qi Phase

- Treatment should begin around Day 21 and can go through day 28.
- Treatment should focus on Coursing the Liver and Rectifying the Qi (and Warming Yang if necessary)
Representative Diseases to Treat During Phase 3

Day 21

Day 28

Qi
Menstrual Movement Diseases
So-called “PMS”

- Treatment for MMD begins on the first day of symptoms and continues until the onset of menses.
- There is a HUGE number of MMD which are almost all caused by LV/SP/ST disharmony.
Menstrual Movement Diseases
So-called “PMS”

- There are hundreds of possible symptoms, here are several common examples:

  - Breast distention
  - Headaches
  - Diarrhea
  - Dizziness
  - Irritability
  - Depression/
    Anxiety
  - Digestive problems
  - Acne
Menstrual Movement Diseases
So-called “PMS”

- There are hundreds of possible symptoms, here are several common examples:
  - Breast distention
  - Headaches
  - Diarrhea
  - Dizziness
  - Irritability
  - Depression/
    Anxiety
  - Digestive problems
  - Acne
  - Nausea

Harmonizing Formulas Are Your Friends
Menstrual Diseases

Painful Menses

- We don’t typically treat during the menses.
- Unless there is a disease of the menses.
Menstrual Diseases

Painful Menses

- Begin treatment 5-7 days prior to onset of menstruation during Qi phase. Branch medicinals increase in strength as menses approach.

- Painful Menstruation can begin a day or two prior to onset and continue several day into menses.
Menstrual Diseases

Painful Menses

• The nature of pain can vary from diffuse to fixed in location; and from achy to sharp and piercing in quality.

• May or may not be accompanied by clots of various sizes and colors.
Menstrual Diseases

Painful Menses

- Determine the cause: Qi stagnation, Cold, Phlegm/Damp, Blood Stasis or any combination of the above.

- Responds well to acupuncture and/or moxibustion.
Menstrual Diseases

Heavy Menstruation is usually due to Heat or Spleen/KD Qi vacuity. In these cases the first priority is to stop the profuse amount of bleeding.

Focusing on the tip/branch during menstruation and root during other appropriate phases.
Menstrual Diseases

Heavy Menses

- *Ye Tian Shi* “first stop the bleeding”

- May require Spleen Qi supplementation, KD Astringing, Blood Quickening medicinals, and/or Stop Bleeding Medicinals
• Huang Qi, Wu Zei Gu/Hai Piao Xiao, Qian Cao, Wul Ling Zhi, Pu Huang are examples of commonly used medicals added to base formulas depending on patterns.

• Be sure to address all appropriate patterns or the Bleeding will not come under control completely.
Case Studies
Case Study

- Patient is 35 year old female, 5’4” 195lbs, red cheeks. CC: Shortened cycle and painful, clotty menses.
Case Study

• Four Firsts:

Age: 33

Sex: F

Body Type: Taiyang/Shaoyang

Complexion: Red cheeks/broken blood vessels
Case Study

- Four Firsts:
  
  Age: 33 (LV/SP)

  Sex: F (Blood)

  Body Type: Taiyang/Shaoyang (dampness/heat)

  Complexion: Red cheeks/broken blood vessels (heat/stasis)
Case Study

- Patient is 35 year old female, 5’4” 195lbs, red cheeks.
  CC: Shortened cycle and painful, clotty menses.
Case Study

- Patient is 35 year old female, 5’4” 195lbs, red cheeks. CC: Shortened cycle and painful, clotty menses.

- Menses have been early for the last 6 months, every 24 days, 5 days in duration with very heavy bleeding first 2-3 days (changes super tampon every 3 hours.)
Case Study

- Patient is 35 year old female, 5’4” 195lbs, red cheeks. CC: Shortened cycle and painful, clotty menses.

- Menses have been early for the last 6 months, every 24 days, 5 days in duration with very heavy bleeding first 2-3 days (changes super tampon every 3 hours.)

- There are quarter-sized, dark clots and sharp pain in her lower abdomen the day before and first 2 days of menses.
Case Study

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- Menses have been early for the last 6 months, every 24 days, 5 days in duration with very heavy bleeding first 2-3 days (changes super tampon every 3 hours.)

- There are quarter-sized, dark clots and sharp pain in her lower abdomen the day before and first 2 days of menses.

- She reports small amount of mid-cycle thick, yellow vaginal discharge. She also reports irritability, breast tenderness about 7 days prior to menstruation.
Case Study

- Additional relevant information:
- Deep fatigue all the time, gas, bloating
- Skin flushes very easily when irritated
- Diet is carb rich, she is a baker
- Acne around mouth and chin, bright red worse pre-menstrual
- Bowels are formed, 1X/day, easy to pass, not sticky; no unusual urination symptoms.
Case Study

![Graph showing basal body temperature over different cycle days and days of the week.](image-url)
Case Study
Treatment Plan

- Diseases present in all 4 cycles.


- Treatment Principles: Harmonize the LV/SP and LV/ST, Quicken the Blood and Dispel Stasis and Stop Pain, Drain Dampness and Clear Heat.

- Phase treatment for month one.
Treatment Plan
Month 1 Phase 1

- Begin Tx immediately upon cessation of menstruation
- Harmonize the LV/SP and LV/ST, Clear Heat, Drain Damp
- *Xiao Chai Hu Tang 80 + Er Chen Tang 20*
Treatment Plan
Month 1 Ovulation

• Begin with Ovulation (BBT) and take for 3 days
• Harmonize the LV/SP and LV/ST, Clear Heat, Drain Damp
• *Xiao Chai Hu Tang* 60 + *Er Chen Tang* 20 + *Er Miao San* 20
Month One Case Progress Report

- Ovulated on Day 11
- Mid-cycle vaginal discharge eliminated.
- PMS symptoms same
- Menses same.
- Flow about the same, still heavy.
- Still fatigued
Treatment Plan
Month 2 Phase 1

- Begin Tx immediately upon cessation of menstruation
- Harmonize the LV/SP and LV/ST, Clear Heat
  - *Xiao Chai Hu Tang* 70
    + Xiang Fu 10
    + Mu Dan Pi 10
    + Zhi Zi 10
Treatment Plan
Month 2 Phase 3

- Jia Wei Xiao Chai Hu Tang 70g
  + Hong Hua 15g
  + Tao Ren 15g

- From onset of PMS symptoms until Day 1 of menstruation
Treatment Plan
Month 2 Phase 4

- During menses:
  - Xue Fu Zhu Yu Tang 80
    + Yi Mu Cao 10
    + Dan Shen 10
- 12g/day
Month Two Case Progress Report

- Ovulation on day 12
- PMS symptoms reduced by 50%
- Menses: mild increase in pain and much larger number of clots discharged
- Flow about the same, still heavy.
- Still fatigued
Treatment Plan
Month 3 Phase 1

- Harmonize the LV/SP and LV/ST
- *Xiao Chai Hu Tang* 80g + *Er Chen Tang* 20g
- 16g/day (granules)
Treatment Plan
Month 3 Phase 3

- Jia Wei Xiao Chai Hu Tang 70g
  + Hong Hua 15g
  + Tao Ren 15g
Treatment Plan
Month 3 Phase 4

- From Day 26 - end of menses:
  - Xue Fu Zhu Yu Tang 80
    + Yi Mu Cao 10
    + Dan Shen 10
  - 12g/day
Month Three Case Progress Report

- Ovulation day 13
- PMS symptoms reduced by 90+%  
- Menses: Very few, small clots, volume reduced greatly (70%) virtually no pain.
- Fatigue improved about 50% better
Treatment Plan
Month 4 Phase 1

- Begin Tx immediately upon cessation of menstruation

- Xiao Chai Hu Tang 70g + Er Chen Tang 30g
Treatment Plan
Month 4 Phase 3

- *Xiao Chai Hu Tang 70*
  + Xiang Fu 10
  + Mu Dan Pi 10
  + Zhi Zi 10

- From onset of PMS symptoms until Day 1 of menstruation
Treatment Plan
Month 2 Phase 4

- During menses:
  - Jia Wei Xiao Yao San
  - 12g/day
Month Four Case Progress Report

- Ovulation day 14
- PMS symptoms reduced by 90+%  
- Menses: No pain, no clots, flow was medium to heavy
- Fatigue improved about 65% better
Month Four Case Progress Report

- Patient was advised to continue with dietary changes, exercise and meditation.
- Patient was dispensed 2 months of JWXYS to take at low dose daily.
- Follow up in 6 months revealed no return of menstrual cycle symptoms.