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HOLISTIC MEDICINE FOR WOMEN

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2 **VENUS OF WILLENDORF**

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"Your blood is sacred and speaks of your womanliness. Be proud of your time. It is not the 'curse' as you white women call it."

Andrews, Lynn V., *Flight of the Seventh Moon, The*

Teachings of the Shields

4 **ABOUT ME**

Graduated from Bastyr University (a government-accredited 4 year naturopathic medical school) with a Doctorate in Naturopathic Medicine

Board-certified in Naturopathic medicine

Licensed Primary Care Naturopathic Physician in Vermont (NPI# 1992075121)

Certified Medical Technologist by the American Society of Clinical Pathologists
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Background in laboratory medicine

5 **CONTENTS OF TODAY'S LECTURE**

Premenstrual Syndrome
Dysmenorrhea (painful menses)
Menorrhagia (excessive menstrual bleeding)
Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome
Vaginal Infections
Bladder Infections
Perimenopause & Menopause
Osteoporosis
Breast Health: Fibrocystic Change, Breast Cancer

6 **CHANGING WOMAN: NAVAJO**

7 **PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME**

A recurrent condition characterized by various physical and emotional changes occurring 2 weeks- 48 hours prior to onset of menstruation.

Physical changes: headaches, breast swelling and tenderness, bloating and water retention, nausea, aches and pains, abdominal pain, increased appetite, food cravings, sweating, palpitations

Emotional changes: fatigue, depression, irritability, tension, lack of concentration, insomnia, aggressiveness, moodiness, forgetfulness, teary, confusion, loneliness, and in some severe cases psychosis.

8 **PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME**

Classifications:

PMS-A: anxiety, irritability, nervous tension

-low B vitamins, low magnesium, increased estrogen and decreased progesterone

PMS-C: increased appetite, craving for sweets; increased intake of refined sugar followed by palpitations, fatigue, fainting spells, headache, tremors

-increased binding of insulin leading to increased carbohydrate tolerance, low magnesium

PMS-D: depression, withdrawal, insomnia, forgetfulness, confusion

-low B vitamins, low magnesium, low estrogen, high progesterone, increased adrenal androgens

PMS-H: edema, abdominal bloating, breast pain and tenderness, weight gain

-stress, low B vitamins, low magnesium, high refined sugar consumption, increased sodium and water retention, excess aldosterone

9 **PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME: THEORIES**

-Evolutionary adaption: via mood to reject advances of an over-eager male during a relatively infertile time of the menstrual cycle.

-Neuroendocrine: high estrogen to progesterone ratio

-MAD: monoamine oxidase breaks down norepinephrine which can lead to mood disturbances. Theory behind the use of antidepressants

- Increased prolactin levels
- Low B6 (a vitamin co-factor in dopamine and serotonin synthesis)
- Increased family tension and stress
- Fear or negative attitude toward menarche and menses
- Poor self experience with menses
- Current textbooks: poor performance and/or acceptance of feminine psychosocial role! (good grief)

10  **PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME**

ALL TYPES:

Dietary suggestions: high in fruits and vegetables, and whole-grains moderate in good fats (olive oil, flaxseed oil, avocados, cold-water fish, nuts and seeds), moderate in lean, organic poultry, and eggs, low in organic grass-fed red meats and dairy products and low in refined sugars and refined carbohydrates.

Provide liver support to help with metabolism of hormones. Foods such as beets, carrots, artichokes, lemons, parsnips, dandelion and burdock.) Herbs such as dandelion root, burdock root, milk thistle seeds.

Support adrenal glands: good B-complex, herbs such as the ginsengs, licorice, rhodiola, schisandra, ashwagandha, maca

A good multivitamin and additional B-complex and Magnesium supplement

Exercise may help to increase progesterone and decrease estrogen dominance through decrease fat tissue.

11  **PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME**

Additional considerations:

Castor oil packs over liver.

Depression: 5-HTP or tryptophan, St. John's Wort, vitamin B6. Not to be used when taking prescription anti-depressants

Breast tenderness: Vitamin E

Herbs useful for PMS: Chaste tree berry, Dong quai, Dandelion root, Sarsaparilla

Natural progesterone cream used in difficult cases from ovulation to menses

12  **DYSMENORRHEA**

Painful menstruation

Characterized by lower abdominal pain (cramping, pulling, etc...) that may or may not radiate. Starts prior to or with onset of bleeding.

Very commonly with PMS.

Primary dysmenorrhea: occurs without an underlying pathology. In Naturopathic

medicine we commonly see poor liver function and elimination, and estrogen dominance.

Secondary dysmenorrhea: is due to a specific pathological process such as endometriosis, uterine fibroids, PID, adhesions, etc....

13  **DYSMENORRHEA: APPROACHES**

Dietary suggestions: same for PMS

Fish oil, flaxseed oil, rich in anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids

Plenty of fiber and water to ensure bowels are emptying properly.

Support the liver and bowel elimination: liver foods, dandelion root, burdock root, yellowdock root, turkey rhubarb, Swedish Bitters

Tonify the uterus and move energy in the pelvis:

-Yarrow, Black and Blue Cohosh, Dong quai, Lady's Mantle, Red root, Ocotillo, False Unicorn Root, Red Raspberry

Support the adrenal glands: B complex, schisandra, maca, licorice, siberian ginseng
Magnesium!!!!!!

14  **DYSMENORRHEA: APPROACHES**

Castor oil packs over the abdomen. First apply St. John's Wort oil to the abdomen, then add the castor oil pack.

Magnesium phos 6X: 3-4 pellets dissolved under the tongue as needed

Specific herbs: Wild yam, Jamaican Dogwood, Cramp Bark

Honor yourself, your blood and your moontime. Take time for yourself.

15  **MENORRHAGIA**

Excessively prolonged or profuse menses

>2 super absorbent pads every 2 hours over a 24 hour period

Normal blood loss during menses is around 60-250ml or ~20 pads

Falls under the category of dysfunctional uterine bleeding

NOT associated with pathology: tumor, endometriosis, fibroids, complications of pregnancy, hypothyroidism, coagulation disorders, IUD use, PID or unopposed estrogen replacement

16  **MENORRHAGIA: APPROACHES**

Dietary: as suggested in PMS

Vitamins A, C, E and K

Omega 3-fatty acids, such as fish or cod liver oil

Treat Iron deficiency if present

Uterine tonics: Red raspberry, Lady's mantle

Specific herbs: Yarrow, Shepherd's Purse, Cinnamon, Erigeron

17 **MENORRHAGIA: APPROACHES**

Sabina 200C homeopathic: few pellets dissolved under the tongue every 3-4 hours as needed

Address thyroid conditions if present. Support adrenal glands: B complex, schisandra, maca, licorice

Ensure proper elimination via colon, lungs, liver, etc...to help prevent detoxification through menses.

18 **POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME**

Formerly Stein-Leventhal Syndrome. Also known as chronic oligoanovulation. 5-10% of women of reproductive age

Symptoms: weight gain, facial hair, hirsutism, irregular menses, ovarian cysts, elevated cholesterol, blood pressure, insulin resistance. May develop type 2 diabetes due to insulin resistance.

Must have anovulatory cycles with irregular menses for diagnosis

Elevated androgens (testosterone)

Cause is unknown. Maybe a genetic component. One theory is that an abnormal hypothalamus tells the ovaries to overproduce testosterone.

What came first? The insulin resistance or the increased androgens. One researcher found that insulin resistance can lead to ovaries overproducing testosterone

Increased risk of diabetes, endometrial cancer and heart disease

19 **POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME**

Dietary suggestions:

Decrease calories if overweight

High protein, low carb to help with insulin resistance

Fiber can decrease excess estrogen

1 tablespoon ground flaxseeds can decrease androgens and decrease insulin resistance

Exercise at least 20 minutes daily

Support thyroid (many women have concomitant thyroid disease), liver and adrenals

Herbs: Chaste tree berry, Saw palmetto, Nettle root

**the key is addressing the insulin resistance....many women will improve on these measures alone

20 **LILITH: HEBREW**

21 **VAGINAL INFECTIONS**

pH of the vagina is normally around 4.2

Changes in vaginal pH may encourage infection

Yeast favor an even more acidic vagina

Bacteria favor a more alkaline vagina

Excess douching, contraception and spermicides, and semen can all disturb vaginal pH

If vaginal infections are a chronic issue and not related to the above, we may address

any underlying issue with dysbiosis in the gut, and/or pelvic stagnation that may be related to liver stagnation.

Remember, discharges usually mean that toxins are being released from the body. We want to make sure organs of elimination are working properly

22 **VAGINAL INFECTIONS: YEAST**

Discharge tends to be thick, curdy and white. Very itchy

Avoid refined sugars and carbohydrates

Eat plenty of plain yoghurt with fruit, or take large doses of probiotics

In women with chronic vaginal infections, I like FemDophilus by Jarrow

Consider a daily yoghurt douche 1C (1/2 yoghurt, 1/2 water) or insert 1-2 probiotic capsules into the vagina daily

Suppositories-Boric acid, such as Vitanica Yeast Arrest

Herbal Douches: with Goldenseal, Echinacea, Garlic

Mix equal parts Aloe vera gel, Witchazel, and Calendula lotion or oil and refrigerate.

Use this on inflamed, itchy vulvas

23 **VAGINAL INFECTIONS: BACTERIA**

Discharge tends to be thinner, grayish and may smell fishy

When vaginal pH becomes more alkaline

Excess douching, spermicides, lubes, semen are big culprits

Avoid refined sugars and refined carbohydrates for the time

Eat lots of plain yoghurt and optionally yoghurt douche

Or vinegar douche (1-4 tbsp vinegar per quart of water)

Herbal douche: Goldenseal, Garlic, Echinacea

Suppositories, old time Naturopathic one is called Vaginal Depletion Pack

Same lotion as for yeast for itchy, sore, inflamed vulva

24 **URINARY TRACT INFECTION**

Most commonly due to bacteria E.coli (comes from the bowel)

May arise due to intercourse (urinate after sex helps prevent)

After bowel movement, wipe front to back (to avoid bringing bowel flora into vagina and exposing to urethra)

Usually presents as burning, painful urination with urgency and frequency. Smelly urine. May also have pain above the pubic bone (called suprapubic pain)

Anytime you see blood in the urine, or develop low back pain or fever see your physician right away.

25 **URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS**

Flush it out: an 8 oz glass of water every hour. You should be urinating regularly.

Alternately, mix equal parts unsweetened cranberry juice and water. Drink an 8oz glass of this mixture every hour.

Cranberries contain d-mannose which makes it harder for the bacteria to stick to the bladder wall.

No refined sugars or refined carbohydrates at this time. No dairy.

Vitamin : 2000mg three times daily during infection

Echinacea tincture: 1 drop tincture per 2lb body weight. During infection can dose every 2 hours. As you improve bring it to 3-4 times per day then 1-2 times per day then discontinue

26 **URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS**

Other useful herbs include: Uva-ursi, Buchu, Couchgrass, Marshmallow root, Cornsilk, Dandelion leaf

Avoid excessive douching, bubblebaths, tampons, nylon underwear and pantyhose . These all can contribute to urethral irritation

27 **BRIGHID: CELTIC**28 **PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE**

Perimenopause starts with changes in the menstrual cycle and ends 12 months after the final menstrual period. It is also known as the "climacteric" and the average age in which it begins is 47.5

Menopause refers to the time of the final menstrual period. A woman is considered to be postmenopausal after 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period.

The most common symptoms associated with perimenopause include a decline in fertility, irregular cycles, hot flashes and nightsweats, sleep disturbances, changes in mood

29 **PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE**

Symptoms commonly associated with menopause:

Hot flashes and night sweats

Sleep disturbances

Urinary issues

Vulvovaginal changes

Headaches

Emotional disturbances

Memory changes

Body aches and fatigue

Changes in libido

30 **PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE**

While perimenopausal, many women find success with using the same treatments as with PMS with the addition of other treatments as indicated for manifestations of the climacteric.

A diet high in fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. Modest in nuts, seeds, lean poultry, eggs and fish. Low in red meats and dairy. (You can get a lot of calcium from leafy greens as well as dairy).

Herbs such as chaste tree berry to support hormones

Support adrenal glands with herbs such as maca, schisandra, ashwagandha

Support the liver with herbs such as bitters, milk thistle

St. John's Wort may be added with depression

A nervine such as Passionflower or Valerian for anxiety

31 **PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE**

Supplements such as Magnesium, vitamin B6 and evening primrose oil

If hot flashes and night sweats are an issue I often recommend garden sage tea, especially before bed, or I combine it with other herbs in a tincture Black Cohosh helps some women. I have had good success with hot flashes with a product called Estrovera by Metagenics.

There are so many herbs to choose from for perimenopause and menopause. Often learning the patient's history and symptoms in depth will allow for choosing the most appropriate ones.

Topical progesterone cream (20-30mg per dose):

Perimenopause:

Days 1-7: none

Days 8-28: ¼ tsp twice daily

Menopause:

¼ tsp twice daily continuously

32 **PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE**

Irregular Cycles

Get exposure to the full moon. If not possible, sleep in total darkness except for the three nights of the full moon. On these nights, use a nightlight.

Red raspberry leaf infusion: 1 T herb to cup boiled water. Drink 3-4 cups daily

Chaste tree berry with Dong quai (no dong quai if you have fibroids)

Progesterone cream

oral contraceptives

33 **PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE**

Flooding

Is common during the hormonal fluctuations prior to menopause

Make sure you aren't becoming Iron deficient

Homeopathics such as Lachesis and Sabina

Lady's mantle herb 2 weeks prior to menses and during menses

Other astringent herbs such as Yarrow, Cinnamon, Shepherd's purse

Fish oils and/or evening primrose oil

Your gynecologist should rule out other reasons for flooding first

34 **HECATE: THRACIAN, GREEK**

35 **MENOPAUSE**

Hot flashes

Estrovera

Drink plenty of water, use ice, cool showers, fans

Homeopathy may assist (very individualized)

Soy isoflavones

Herbs such as Black Cohosh, Red Clover, Nettles, Alfalfa

Sage at night for nightsweats

Vitamin E and B complex

Trigger foods: spicy foods, acidic foods, caffeine, alcohol, tobacco

Support liver, thyroid and adrenals

36 **MENOPAUSE**

Motherwort herb for hot flashes accompanied by emotional uproar and heart palpitations

Emotional uproar

Sunlight

Homeopathy

Herbs such as St. Johnswort, Passionflower, Oatstraw

Moderate aerobic exercise
 B complex vitamins
 Meditation, massage therapy

Libido

Support adrenals (like maca)
 address emotional realm
 herbs such as muira puama, catuaba, damiana

37 **MENOPAUSE**

Sleep disturbances

Herbs such as Valerian, Passionflower, Skullcap, oatstraw, nettles, hops
 Melatonin or 5-HTP
 Do something relaxing before bed: no computer or tv or stressful reading

Vaginal Dryness

Vitamin E oil, coconut oil, comfrey, calendula, plantain, and other herbal ointments
 drinking enough water
 vaginal probiotics (insert one or two probiotic capsules daily)
 slippery elm gruel vaginally
 visualization, kegels

38 **HRT SUPPORT**

Water Retention

Dandelion leaf tincture or eaten in salads
 Asparagus, nettles, grapes, cucumbers, watermelon, parsley, celery

Headaches

Support the liver
 Sage tea
 Magnesium
 Herbs like skullcap, lavender, white willow bark

Dry Eyes

cucumber slices
 oatstraw tea
 chickweed poultices

39 **OSTEOPOROSIS**

Calcium requirements increase in menopause to 1200-1500mg per day
 Best taken with Vitamin D3 (2000IU/day) and Vitamin K2 to help it deposit in the bones

Calcium rich herbs: nettles, raspberry leaf, oatstraw

A strong infusion of one of these herbs has about 250-300mg

Calcium rich greens: spinach, kale, broccoli, turnip, mustard

1 cup cooked contains around 200mg

Dried fruits like figs, raisins, dates, prunes

1 cup of plain yoghurt has 350-400mg

Calcium rich protein sources: tahini, tofu, oats, seaweeds, sardines, salmon

40 **OSTEOPOROSIS**

Stay away from carbonated drinks

Drink lemon water with meals (helps with calcium absorption)
 Weight bearing exercise helps to build stronger bones
 Trace minerals such as boron, silica, strontium are important too.

A nice bone supplement is Bone-Up by Jarrow.

41  **INANNA/ISHTAR, DIANA OF EPHEBUS**

42  **BREAST HEALTH: FIBROCYSTIC CHANGE**

Painful lumps of breast tissue that become inflamed and tender prior to the onset of menses. It is related to the menstrual cycle and is considered a benign condition. Usually will resolve with onset of menses, to recur prior to next cycle.

Avoid methylxanthines: found in coffee and teas (regular and decaf), cola, chocolate
 Ensure diet high in fruits, veggies and whole grains. Low in saturated fats
 Vitamin E and evening primrose oil
 Address iodine deficiency or underactive thyroid. Seaweed contains abundant iodine
 Herbs such as red root, violet, dandelion leaf, cleavers, yarrow
 Support the liver with liver foods or herbs
 Progesterone cream ¼ tsp applied to breasts and palms twice daily from ovulation to menses

Breast massage with Poke root oil (some women may have allergic reaction)
 Can use diluted lavender oil. Breast massage helps to move stagnant lymph
 Other breast oils: plantain, st. john's wort, calendula

43  **BREAST HEALTH: BREAST CANCER PREVENTION**

Consume sources of phytoestrogens such as tofu, red clover infusion, alfalfa infusion
 Include cabbage family vegetables like kale, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower
 Plenty of whole grains, veggies and fruits, beans, nuts and seeds
 Lower consumption of animal products
 Vitamins: C, E, D and carotenes. Eat a rainbow diet ☺
 Minerals, especially Selenium
 Plenty of sleep (melatonin may be preventative)
 Active lifestyle
 Regular self breast exam and breast massage

44  **RECOMMENDED READING**

Susun Weed
 Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year
 Menopausal Years: The Wise Woan Way
 Breast Cancer? Breast Health!
 Rosemary Gladstar
 Herbal Healing for Women
 Tori Hudson, N.D.
 Women's Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine
 Christine Northrup, M.D.
 Pretty much anything