

Herbal Remedies for Premenstrual Syndrome: Myth or Science?

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Abstract

Many women throughout the globe deal with the physical, emotional, and mental challenges that come with Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS). Hormonal therapy and painkillers are common conventional treatments, but many women also turn to alternative methods, especially herbal medicines. Several popular herbal remedies for premenstrual syndrome (PMS) are investigated in this article, including chasteberry, evening primrose oil, peppermint, ginger, chamomile, dong quai, and turmeric. Chasteberry and ginger have a lot of scientific support for their ability to help with premenstrual syndrome symptoms including irritability, cramping, and mood swings, according to research. There is either conflicting or inadequate data about the effectiveness of evening primrose oil with dong quai. A number of variables, including dose, individual physiological reactions, and herb preparation quality, determine whether or not these herbal remedies are beneficial. To prevent possible interactions and negative consequences, it is important to utilise herbal treatments cautiously and under medical supervision, despite their promised advantages. The best treatment for premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms may be a mix of dietary changes, lifestyle adjustments, and herbal therapies supported by research. To confirm the effectiveness and safety of these herbal remedies for PMS management, more large-scale clinical trials are required.

Keywords: Premenstrual Syndrome, Conventional Treatments, Hormonal Therapies and Pain Relievers

Introduction

Millions of women across the globe suffer with Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), a disorder characterised by a broad range of symptoms experienced by women in the days before their periods. Depending on the severity, these symptoms might affect one's ability to go about everyday life, be productive at work, and feel well in general. Mood swings, irritability, exhaustion, headaches, bloating, breast tenderness, and stomach cramps are common symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), which is a major public health problem.

Hormonal medications, such as oral contraceptives, and lifestyle changes, such as increased physical activity and a healthier diet, are the mainstays of conventional medicine's treatment of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). But because of worries about side effects, long-term health hazards, or just a desire for natural healing techniques, not all women find these therapies helpful or appropriate. Because of this, many are looking to alternative therapies, especially herbal medicines, which have a long history of use in traditional medicine.

Some of the herbal medicines that are widely touted as natural cures for hormonal imbalances and PMS symptoms include chasteberry, evening primrose oil, turmeric, ginger, and others. Herbal medicine advocates claim that their products may stabilise mood, decrease inflammation, ease pain, and normalise menstrual cycles. The fundamental issue, however, is whether or not these herbal remedies are effective and not just urban legends.

The efficacy, safety, and hazards of frequently used herbal medicines for premenstrual syndrome are examined in this article, which also examines the scientific evidence supporting these therapies. Our objective is to ascertain if these therapies are viable substitutes or whether they are not supported by enough scientific evidence by reviewing both traditional wisdom and contemporary research.

Common Herbal Remedies for PMS

Chasteberry (*Vitex Agnus-Castus*)

According to popular belief, chasteberry may aid with premenstrual syndrome symptoms like mood swings, irritability, and breast soreness, in addition to balancing hormones. It alleviates

menstrual cycle hormonal imbalances by affecting overall hormone levels in the body and, in particular, by controlling prolactin. Some clinical trials showed substantial reductions in breast discomfort and mood problems, suggesting that chasteberry may be useful in lowering PMS symptoms, according to scientific investigations. One of the best herbal remedies for menstrual health, chasteberry offers many advantages that have been studied extensively. However, results may vary from person to person, so it's best to talk to a doctor before using this.

Evening Primrose Oil

For PMS symptoms including breast soreness, bloating, and mood swings, evening primrose oil is a common remedy due to its high gamma-linolenic acid (GLA) content. People who use it regularly report better menstrual health and less hormonal swings. Some research suggests that evening primrose oil could help with premenstrual syndrome symptoms to a lesser extent than a placebo, while other studies have failed to find any discernible effect. More study is required to validate its usefulness because of these inconsistent findings. Furthermore, since reactions differ from person to person, it's possible that some women may benefit and others will not.

Ginger

Ginger is well known for its anti-inflammatory properties and has been traditionally used to relieve menstrual pain and discomfort. Scientific research supports its effectiveness in reducing the severity of menstrual cramps, with some studies indicating that it works similarly to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen. In addition to reducing pain, ginger may also help alleviate nausea and fatigue associated with PMS. Due to its natural properties and minimal side effects, ginger is widely used in various forms, including teas, capsules, and fresh preparations, to support menstrual health.

Peppermint and Chamomile

Both peppermint and chamomile are commonly consumed as herbal teas to aid digestion, reduce bloating, and promote relaxation. Chamomile, in particular, is known for its mild anti-anxiety and muscle-relaxing properties, which may help alleviate PMS-related stress, mood swings, and tension. While chamomile tea has been traditionally used to ease menstrual discomfort, direct research on its impact on PMS is limited. However, its calming effects on the nervous system may provide some relief from emotional symptoms such as irritability and restlessness. Peppermint tea, on the other hand, is effective in reducing bloating and digestive discomfort, which are common PMS symptoms.

Dong Quai (Angelica Sinensis)

Dong Quai is a well-known herb in traditional Chinese medicine, often used to regulate menstrual cycles and relieve PMS symptoms. It is believed to improve blood circulation and balance estrogen levels, potentially helping with menstrual cramps and hormonal fluctuations. However, scientific research on its effectiveness remains limited, and caution is advised, especially for women taking blood-thinning medications, as dong quai may increase the risk of bleeding. While some women report benefits from using dong quai for menstrual health, further clinical trials are needed to confirm its efficacy.

Turmeric (Curcumin)

The anti-inflammatory and antioxidant capabilities of turmeric, and curcumin in particular, have gained a lot of attention. Many women get relief from their PMS symptoms, including cramps and mood swings, by using this natural cure. Curcumin is an intriguing substance for menstrual health since some research suggest it may alleviate inflammation and discomfort associated with premenstrual syndrome. More large-scale research are required to confirm that turmeric effectively treats PMS symptoms, despite promising early results. Many women add turmeric to their diet as a spice, a supplement, or a tea since it is typically safe to consume and has extra health advantages. This helps with overall well-being.

Global usage

Herbal remedies have been traditionally used worldwide to manage premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms. However, comprehensive global usage statistics for specific herbs are limited. Nonetheless, certain herbs have gained prominence due to their perceived effectiveness and cultural significance.

Chasteberry (Vitex Agnus-Castus): This herb has been utilized for centuries to address hormone-related gynecologic conditions, including PMS. Contemporary literature supports its use for cyclical breast discomfort and PMS, making it one of the most researched herbal remedies in this context.

Evening Primrose Oil: Rich in gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), evening primrose oil is commonly used to alleviate PMS symptoms such as breast pain, bloating, and mood swings. However, studies on its efficacy have yielded mixed results, with some research indicating mild benefits and others showing no significant effects compared to placebos.

Ginger: Known for its anti-inflammatory properties, ginger is widely used to relieve menstrual pain and discomfort. Research supports ginger's effectiveness in reducing pain severity, comparable to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), making it a popular natural remedy for menstrual cramps.

Peppermint and Chamomile: These herbs are often consumed as teas to help with digestive issues, bloating, and relaxation. Chamomile, in particular, has been shown to have mild anti-anxiety and muscle-relaxing properties, although its direct impact on PMS is less studied.

Dong Quai (Angelica Sinensis): A traditional Chinese medicine herb, dong quai is used to regulate menstrual cycles and relieve PMS symptoms. However, limited research supports its effectiveness, and it may interact with medications like blood thinners, necessitating caution.

Turmeric (Curcumin): Known for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, turmeric is believed to help with PMS symptoms like cramps and mood swings. Some studies suggest that curcumin may reduce PMS-related pain and inflammation, but more large-scale studies are needed to confirm these findings.

While these herbs are popular in various cultures for managing PMS symptoms, individual experiences and responses can vary. It's essential to consult with a healthcare provider before incorporating any herbal remedies into your regimen, especially if you are taking other medications or have underlying health conditions.

Are Herbal Remedies a Myth or Science?

While some herbal remedies, such as chasteberry and ginger, have strong scientific backing for alleviating PMS symptoms, others remain controversial due to limited or inconclusive research. The effectiveness of these remedies is influenced by multiple factors, including dosage, individual body responses, and the quality of the herbal preparation. Dosage plays a crucial role, as herbal treatments do not have standardized amounts like pharmaceutical drugs, leading to variations in effectiveness. Too little may be ineffective, while excessive intake may cause adverse effects. Individual body responses also vary, as each woman's hormonal balance, metabolism, and genetic predisposition can influence how well an herbal remedy works for her PMS symptoms. What proves effective for one person may not yield the same results for another. Additionally, the quality of herbal preparations can differ significantly depending on the source, processing methods, and purity of the ingredients. Some supplements may contain lower concentrations of active compounds or be contaminated with additives, affecting their efficacy and safety.

Considerations and Precautions

- Always consult a healthcare provider before using herbal remedies, especially if taking other medications.
- Herbal supplements are not regulated as strictly as pharmaceuticals, so quality and potency may vary.

- Some herbs may cause allergic reactions or interact with existing health conditions.

Conclusion

Herbal remedies for PMS are a blend of myth and science—while some have solid scientific support, others require further research to confirm their effectiveness. Women seeking natural approaches should rely on well-researched herbs like chasteberry and ginger, which have shown promising results in alleviating PMS symptoms, while remaining cautious of unverified claims surrounding other herbal treatments. Since individual responses to herbal remedies can vary, it is essential to consider factors such as dosage, quality, and potential interactions with other medications. Ultimately, a holistic approach that includes lifestyle modifications, a balanced diet, regular exercise, and evidence-based herbal treatments may provide the most effective relief for PMS symptoms, promoting overall well-being and menstrual health.

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