

anti-spasmodic effect, relaxing and toning the system, and supporting liver function. For example, Dong quai, Chaste tree, Peony, Wild Yam, Corydalis, Cramp bark and St Mary's Thistle just to name a few. As a starting place, try teas like Chamomile, Red clover, Raspberry leaf and Passionflower for gentle pain relief and toning. Ginger tea is great if nausea is present, and also helps reduce those prostaglandins. Dandelion root is great for the liver, while the leaf helps reduce fluid retention.

Homeopathic remedies can also offer help although professional assistance is best to find the right remedy. As an example: If your pain is better for stretching out straight, try Dioscorea; If your pain is accompanied by anxiety and restlessness, try Aconite; Colocynthis is great when pain is better for warmth and curling up tight. These are just some examples, and there are many more depending on your own unique pattern.

If you want to do your own research, there's some great books out there. Some that I love are:

Ruth Trickey [Women, Hormones and the Menstrual Cycle](#)

Ruth Trickey & Kaz Cooke [Women's Trouble, Natural and Medical Solutions](#)

Kristianne Northrup [Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom](#)

Jennifer Loudon [The Women's Comfort Book](#)



Natural remedies for Period pain

Period pain, or dysmenorrhoea, is definitely not how things were meant to be! A small amount of discomfort from time to time may be OK, as long as you can manage it without the need for lots of pain killers, but anything more than that deserves some attention. After all, pain is your body's warning system - that's how it lets you know that things might not be quite right!

What causes period pain?

Sometimes there may be obvious reasons for it, and there are also times when we can't be sure of the cause - but there are lots of theories!

Pain may happen because there is some kind of pathology - this is called 'secondary dysmenorrhea'. For example, infection, fibroids, cysts or endometriosis. If pain is severe, it is important to see a doctor to make sure you don't have any of these problems.

When there is no identifiable pathology, pain can often be a sign of hormonal imbalances - associated, for example, with heavy bleeding and clotting which may cause stronger contractions of the uterus. It can be related to ovulation; that is, some women when they don't ovulate may not have painful periods (eg. women on the pill or those first few years of menstruation). High levels of particular types of prostaglandins (pain chemicals in the body) can contribute to the intensity of period pain. Other factors like emotional stress, poor diet and lack of exercise can also play a role.

Types of pain...

Sometimes you may find you have a dominant type of pain, other times it may be less obvious or you seem to get a bit of everything! For example, spasmodic period pain often starts with the onset of bleeding and is sudden, very sharp and tends to come in waves. Pain that is heavy, dull and dragging, often starting several days before the period can be a sign of congestion. It may also be associated with fluid retention. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) typically seems to make period pain worse and vice versa. For some women, pain is also accompanied by nausea/vomiting and diarrhoea because of reflex spasm in nearby organs - call it 'sympathy pains'!

If you tend to have one type more than the other, this can help you decide which remedies might work best. If you regularly experience severe period pain, make sure you have a check up with your doctor to rule out any other problems.

Get relief with...

Exercise is the first most useful place to start for any type of pain, especially because it improves circulation. This can be as simple as walking or swimming, to more specific exercises for period pain. Yoga and pilates can be great for stretching exercises which also help to tone the muscles in the pelvic area.



Dietary changes can lead to huge improvements in pain.

- **reducing saturated fats** in the diet helps reduce excess pain chemicals in the body - watch out for take away, fried, and packaged foods, too much red meat or chicken.
- Eating or supplementing with **Essential Fatty Acids** (eg. Evening Primrose Oil and Fish or Flaxseed oils) helps balance the prostaglandins and ↓ any associated inflammation.
- **Increase circulation** with spices like chilli, ginger and cinnamon; ginger and turmeric are also great anti-inflammatory foods.
- Extra amounts of some **vitamins and minerals** can help, in particular, Calcium and Magnesium, Zinc, vitamin B3, B6 and C. The Tissue Salt **Mag phos** or celloid **PPMP** (available from health food stores and some chemists) is great for spasmodic period pain, and is very affordable and very safe to self-prescribe!
- **smoking, caffeine, stress, high sugar and dairy intake** often make pain worse.
- **Heat packs** and **orgasm** can be great too, especially for congestive type pain (dull, heavy, dragging pain)!
- eat lots of **liver friendly foods** like raw nuts and seeds, garlic and onion, plus loads of fresh fruit and veges! Dandelion root beverages instead of coffee can help your liver while also reducing your caffeine intake.

Herbal teas can be safely self-prescribed, but when it comes to herbal medicines as liquids, you'll need to see a professional Naturopath or Herbalist. These medicines are made up for the individual according to your own unique set of symptoms. Such herbs are used to promote hormonal balance, for pain relief and