

Chinese Herbs relieve Menstrual Pain better than Drugs or Acupuncture

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Chinese herbal medicine appears to be more effective at relieving menstrual cramps and pain than pharmaceutical drugs, acupuncture or heat compression therapy, according to a new study conducted by Australian researchers and published in the journal Cochrane Library.

"All available measures of effectiveness confirmed the overall superiority of Chinese herbal medicine to placebo, no treatment, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, oral contraceptive pills, acupuncture and heat compression," said lead researcher Xiaoshu Zhu, from the Center for Complementary Medicine Research at the University of Western Sydney.

Researchers conducted an analysis of data from 39 different randomized, controlled trials that involved a total of 3,475 women. Women in these trials were given traditional Chinese herbs including cinnamon bark (rougui), Chinese angelica root (danggui), fennel fruit (huixiang), licorice root (gancao), Szechuan lovage root (chuanxiong), Chinese motherwort (yimucuo), nut-grass rhizome (xiangfu), red peony root (chishao) and white peony root (baishao). The treatments were carried out in a traditional way to regulate energy (qi) and blood, warm the body and improve liver and kidney functioning.

The researchers found that Chinese herbal treatments led to a significant reduction in the symptoms of menstrual cramps, and that the degree of pain reduction was higher than that from other treatments. In one study, 53 percent of women receiving Chinese herbal treatment reported decreased pain, in comparison with only 26 percent of the women receiving a placebo treatment.

Menstrual pain is estimated to affect up to 50 percent of women of reproductive age, and anywhere from 60 to 85 percent of teenagers. While some scientists believe that it is caused by a hormonal imbalance, there is still no scientific consensus on the cause.

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