

Yoga and Healthy Life Style Modification in Prevention of Premenstrual Syndrome

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Abstract

With the advent of new millennium and the herald of high-tech era, women's status expected to reach new horizon both socially and physically. But some of the physiological conditions trouble the women to make her slow down, one such problem is premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Premenstrual syndrome is a set of physical, emotional and behavioural changes or discomforts that affects many women a few days or weeks prior to menstruation. Current estimate of the prevalence of clinically significant PMS vary from 12.6% to 31% of menstruating women. Though the exact cause of the PMS is unknown, it can be influenced by several factors like hormonal imbalance, improper diet and lifestyle. These abnormal interactions excite the biological humour resulting imbalance in the body. *Yogasanas* have a vital impact on the endocrine glands to reach a state of balance or normalcy. Lifestyle modification is a pro-active approach towards optimum health. Practice of regular *Asanas* like *Makarasana*, *Shavasana*, *Pranayama*, and meditation along with simple healthy life style changes including regular exercise and healthy diet are beneficial in preventing the premenstrual syndrome.

Key words: *Yoga, Ayurveda, Dosha, Lifestyle, Premenstrual syndrome*

Introduction

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS), also described as premenstrual tension (PMT) is a symptom complex recognised primarily by cyclic changes associated with ovulatory cycles¹. It occurs 7 to 14 days prior to menstruation and spontaneously resolve after menses, and is more frequently encountered in middle aged women. The exact cause is unknown, although several different biological factors have been suggested². Of these, hormones like oestrogen, progesterone, certain neurotransmitter, nutrition inadequacy and improper diet, lifestyle are some of the factors. A wide range of symptoms has been described like depression, irritability, anxiety etc³.

According to *Ayurveda* normal menstruation is a sign of health and

wellbeing. When a woman experiences distress and discomfort, there is an underlying imbalance in *Doshas* (biological humours) like Vata, Pitta and Kapha⁴. These underlying imbalances are the root cause and must be removed if real healing has to occur. Symptoms experienced by women during menstruation depend mainly on the type of *Doshic* involvement.

Yoga has a local as well as systemic effect on the female reproductive system. It helps through a gradual process of fine tuning the endocrine organs of the body to reach the state of balance or normalcy. There are several *Asanas*; *Sarvangasana*, *Halasana* etc have their specific action on these endocrine glands and regulates the hormonal level. It is best to practice these *Asanas* week before the period begins and

during the period. Avoid all inversions during the first few days of the menstrual cycle which includes *Sarvangasana*, *Sirsasana*.

Yogic breathing exercises like *Nadishodana Pranayama* (alternate nostril breathing), *Kapalabhati* and meditation are helps to balance a person's physical, emotional and mental stress⁵.

Healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise and a healthy diet are the important step towards managing the premenstrual syndrome. For many women with mild symptoms, lifestyle approaches are sufficient to control symptoms. Along with these vitamin B6, calcium and vitamin D helps in relieving the symptoms⁶.

Diet, Lifestyle modifications and Yogasanas to prevent the PMS

Vata –type PMS

Symptoms – Nervousness, tension, anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability, crying, insomnia, mild or variable constipation, palpitations, bloating, pains (headache, backache, tender breasts, joint ache), forgetfulness, confusion etc⁷.

Diet – increase warm food and drinks, have regular meals. Avoid - caffeine and other stimulants, refined sugar, cold drinks, salads.

Lifestyle – early bedtime, oil massage using sesame oil, meditation, yoga, regular exercise like walking. Use of *Vata* decreasing herbs like *Ashwagandha*, *Arjuna*, *Lasuna*, *Yashtimadhu*.

Yogasanas-

Adhomukasvanasana, *Uttanasana*, *Suptabaddhakonasana*, *Supthabaddhakonasana*, *Shavasana*, *Makarasana*, *Balāsana*⁸

Pitta –type PMS

Symptoms - Craving for sweets, increased appetite, heart pounding, dizziness or

fainting, fatigue, headache, anger, irritability, feeling hot, acne etc⁷.

Diet – Increase cooling foods, water intake, sweet juicy fruits (grapes, pears, plums, mango, melons, apples) cucumber, organic foods. Avoid-Hot spicy foods, hot drinks and alcohol, eating late at night.

Life style –Go to bed early, oil massage using coconut and sesame oil. Use meditation and other techniques to reduce anger, hatred and resentment. Exercise and exposure to sun are limited. Use of *Pitta* decreasing herbs, *Aloe vera*, *Arjuna*, *Kumkuma*, *Chandana*, *Shatavari*, *Sariva*, *Murva*.

Yogasana-

Adhomukasvanasana, *Dhanurasana*, *Pavanamuktasana*, *Sarvangasana*, *Halāsana*⁸

Kapha- type PMS

Symptoms – weight gain, swelling of extremities, sluggishness, lethargy, fluid retention, lazy, lacking motivation, slow digestion, breast tenderness, abdominal bloating etc⁷.

Diet – prefer light, dry and warm food, consume fruits, whole grains, legumes, vegetables. Use spices such as black pepper, turmeric and ginger. Avoid - Meat, cheese, sugar, cold foods and drinks. Weekly fasting is helpful.

Lifestyle – get up early, mustard oil is recommended for oil massage. Use of *Kapha* decreasing herbs like *cinnamom*, *Guggulu*, honey, *Lasuna*, *Kushta*, *Pippali*, *Guda*, *Ardraka*.

Yogasana-*Upavishtakonasana*, *Halāsana*, *Suptapadangushtasana*, *Viparitarani*, *Upavishtakonasana*, *Halāsana*, *Sarvangasana*⁸

Tips to achieve graceful menstrual period

Balancing *Doshas*- Ascertain the imbalanced *Dosha* according to your

symptoms. Follow balanced diet, drink plenty of fluids, frequent small meals of complex carbohydrates, avoid salt, regular exercise, fibrous rich diet, follow proper sleep habits, mineral and calcium rich diet. Supplementation of vitamin B1, B6 and vitamin E helps in reducing pain and improves both physical and emotional symptoms. All stimulants like tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco drugs must be avoided. Follow the *Sadvritta* or good code of conduct, especially those related to social behaviour and self-control improve an individual's ability to adapt positively to change her response to stress and *Acharya Rasayana* (rejuvenating effect of good conduct. Awareness about personal hygiene and removal of misconceptions related to menstruation play an important role in preventing PMS.

Discussion:

Premenstrual syndrome is a set of physical and emotional symptoms occurs mainly

due to the imbalance in the *Doshas* (biological humours). *Doshas* are one among the principle explained in *Ayurveda*. Yoga explains Prana, tejas and ojas are the essential or beneficial forms of vata, pitta and Kapha that sustain positive vitality. These can be purified through yogic practice, diet and healthy life style modifications, which in turn helps in maintaining normal hormonal level of the endocrine system. Hence regular practice of specific *Asanas*, diet and lifestyle modification according to *Dosha* helps to reduce the symptoms.

Conclusion

Ayurveda does not view premenstrual syndrome as a disease but rather as an imbalance in the *Doshas* that can be corrected. In addition to balancing the *Doshas* practicing the *Yogasanas*, *pranayama*, *meditation*, diet and healthy life style modification helps in the prevention of premenstrual symptoms.

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