



Introductory Manual of

*Natural
Gynaecology*

FIRST

ENGLISH EDITION

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IN ENGLISH

The English version of this book is the fruit of the collective volunteer work of 20 women who dedicated their time and knowledge, and their generous minds and hands, in order to share this knowledge with their fellow women, to their counterparts, and to those who are yet to come.

Infinite thanks to these women.

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*«Las flores de mi jardín
han de ser mis enfermeras»¹*

VIOLETA PARRA



*«La Iglesia dice: el cuerpo es una culpa.
La ciencia dice: el cuerpo es una máquina.
La publicidad dice: el cuerpo es un negocio.
El cuerpo dice: yo soy una fiesta»²*

EDUARDO GALEANO

¹ «May the flowers in my garden / nurse me back to health».

² «The Church says: the body is a sin. / Science says: the body is a machine. / Advertising says: the body is a business. / The body says: I am a celebration».



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This book is an introductory manual intended to accompany the personal and integral growth that each one of us has to develop at her own rhythm and in her own particular context. This book does not aspire to create experts in natural gynaecology, nor does it promote a new “alternative medical specialty” nor is it intended to be used as material to teach profit-motivated courses.

In contrast with the medical industry, which standardizes diagnoses and treatments, we believe that something that works for you will not always have the same result in another woman. Everything that is recommended in this book is part of a comprehensive process. The application of isolated recipes does not guarantee positive results. Moreover, this book does not deliver medical diagnoses and has to be complemented with medical assessment in the case of delicate health .

We appreciate your understanding and respect for this ancestral wisdom.

We would like you to be safe and sound, to be treated with care and to become experts on yourselves. This is a slow and long process, and it is the responsibility of each one of us together as a community.



CHAPTER VIII

MENSTRUAL CYCLE

THE WHEEL OF LIFE



From where I come from, the menstrual cycle has usually been denominated “the rule”, an expression that sounds strict and linear, as if it were a dictatorial regime that appears once a month and governs us, even against our own will. This is not an exaggeration but the way it has been perpetuated over centuries, and it is how many women experience menstruation in their body, even feeling emotionally sick every moon cycle.

Our menstrual cycle has become “painful”, “uncomfortable”, “dirty”, and even categorized as “too wild”, something that needs to be controlled and even over-medicated to go along with the exploitative rhythm of modern civilizations. And this is how science arrived at a solution limited to sedatives and synthetic hormones as a means to medically control our cycle. We can see the negative impact in the distant relationship we have with our very own blood flow and the cosmic moment of connection and renewal that comes with it every month.

This society, in its blindness to women’s needs, must learn that menstruating is a sacred event, a moment of spiritual openness. The sensitivity that comes along with our cycle has been named “hysteria”, or irritability, by a society that does not understand that this sensation is pure intuition. During our cycle, women are conflicted between external demands and our need of space for introspection, calmness,

and leisure as it is an occasion for dialogue and connection with our own nature.

Women have a second sacred heart which is our uterus and it is why we need to recover the wisdom that our blood flow offers us. We need to learn how to listen to the calls and the sensations that life offers us during every moon cycle so we can achieve purity and renewal. If we live according to the rhythms of the outside world, linear and imposed by the current way of life, we will not manage to renew ourselves in order to take on our next and new cycle. We need that time to flow at our own pace.

Our blood comes to clean our energy. It is mandatory to take good care of it, for it is not waste nor “punishment”, as many men have declared in the name of their god... We can’t throw ourselves away nor lose this precious moment of purification.

We need to remove from our heart-uterus the pain that has haunted our balance, and cleanse ourselves from the dark words, images, and taboos that do not allow us to value our own nature. Women need to undertake a journey into the depths of our selves with our senses heightened. We need to recover the spaces that have been usurped and the wisdom that remains silent within us.

RITUALIZE OUR BLOOD

A RITE OF PASSAGE: *ULLCHATUM*

History tells us that in different cultures women retreated when they were menstruating. For example, the *moon lodging* of the native Indians of North America, who would meet in a circle to menstruate within an exclusive tent for women.

This was a place where they shared and learned from wise older women how we are able to synchronize our menstruation when together. All of these women menstruated together on new moon... They simply stopped working and took that pause to reunite with the world and see it with new eyes, opening up a space for reflection, sharing knowledge among themselves, strengthening one another so they could look to a new cycle with a fresh vision.

These practices are being taken-up once again today by many communities of women in different parts of the world who gather in *women's circles* and also to menstruate in *red tents* where harmful habits that affect both sexuality and sacred menstruation are eliminated. In these places, women revere their cycles, share love and hold space for one another throughout their sexual and emotional processes.

Currently, our Western culture lacks the richness embodied by the ritualization of life's transitions and the initiation of a new period. The arrival of *menarche* is not venerated, nor is *menopause*.

Different cultures and tribes with matriarchal approaches have much to teach us: they celebrate the blessing of the advent of fertility in girls with a beautiful ritual. The matriarchal Mosuo population in China continues to do so. In their rite, the girl receives her new women's clothes made by her mother and the women of the community: shirt, skirt, and, most importantly, "a headdress made of yak hair –the ox with long and dark hair from the Himalayas– [...], a cap that ends in the back with a tail that reaches to her waist".¹ Additionally, at the age of 13 the girl receives the keys to the house where she can meet her future lovers at night, although it is understood

¹ Coler, R. (2005). *El reino de las mujeres. El último matriarcado*. Buenos Aires: Planeta, p. 56 [not available in English].

that her sexual initiation takes place years later. The house is called *Babahuago* which means “flower’s room”.

The arrival of menstruation was celebrated in different ways among mapuches –our Chilean native culture– as many stories tell. According to Ziley Mora, a ritual called *Ulchatum* was held during spring time, before the arrival of menstruation. The *malen* (maiden) received from her mother and close women a bath of flowers on the banks of a river. The mother gave her daughter the last bath and it was also the last time she dressed her. At that time the *malen* was also given her new mapuche woman attire, which included items all made by loom and typical silver jewelry. Another story says

The girl was taken into a *ruka*, a hut made with four sticks of *kila*, a native tree (*chusquea coleu*), and coated with fabrics and colourful animal skins [...] This tent was called *rukamalen* [maiden’s house or pretty house] or also named *wenteruka* [house of the top hole or house of the upward opening] given its character of altar of initiation.²

The girl remained in the *maiden’s house* to purify her body through fasting and to receive the teachings of the wise women of her lineage.

Consecrating these rites of passages is a fundamental step in order to integrate and embrace the change that life gives us as is shown in the following segment which details the ceremony of the first moon:

...they rubbed henna on Rachel’s fingernails and on the soles of her feet. Her eyelids were painted yellow, and they slid every bangle, gem, and jewel that could be found onto her fingers, toes, ankles,

² Mora Penroz, Z. (2009). *Magia y secretos de la mujer mapuche. Sexualidad y sabiduría ancestral*. Santiago de Chile: Uqbar Editores, p. 32 [not available in English].

and wrists. They covered her head with the finest embroidery and led her into the red tent. They sang songs for the goddesses [...] ate date honey and fine wheat-flour, made into a triangle shape to represent the woman's vulva. [...] By the time they carried her out into the field where she was married to the land, Rachel was stupid with pleasure and wine. [...] She was full of joy and anticipation, lazing in the tent for the three days, collecting the precious fluid in a bronze bowl –for the first-moon of a virgin was a powerful libation for the garden.³

It should be noted that in many parts of the world girls are subjected to various violent initiations such as being locked up and subjected to different practices, even reaching the rite of “genital mutilation”. It is necessary to clarify these acts were and are still being practiced by patriarchal peoples. It has never been carried out by any “matrilineal” society.

MOON SASH

On our continent, in different native cultures, women wear a woven wool belt around the waist as part of their typical attire. They also wear a red strip (on special occasions) which surrounds the entire pelvis. It is worn on days of ceremonies and when menstruating. It is intended to protect the channel of our womb that expands when the blood is coming down. The colour red also represents strength, passion, and health. This belt is also worn during pregnancy as a method of protection against the evil eye⁴ or in the case of an eclipse which

³ Diamant, A. (1997). *The Red Tent*. New York: Wyatt Books.

⁴ Popular belief in diverse cultures and peoples, according to which a human being has the ability to cause “bad “ to another person only with his/her eyes (it may or may not be an unconscious act). As a result, the person becomes “ojeada”, full of bad energies which can make her/him sick. This

could affect the baby's health. The sash holds and protects our uterus and back, areas that both require heat and care.

An example of this is the *trariwe*, a distinctive belt that fastens the Mapuche women dress which contains several symbols that represent the myth of the snake and the creation of life and fertility. It also has “magical functions; it expresses the desire that the giving and protecting spirits of life protect the female receptacle with, the space where life itself is being brewed”.⁵

WORSHIPING OUR BLOOD

Returning to the traditions that connect us to our natural processes is usually related to the *wild woman* archetype which may seem crazy given the maelstrom of cement in which we live. However, the happier we are, the freer we will become from all those imposed chains.

The following exercises are delightful. Do them to exalt and reconnect with our sacred menstruation:

- Find a quiet place in nature. It may be your backyard or a forest. Treat yourself to a lovely retreat in your early days of menstruation. Take blankets, cushions, water, and food with you. Wear a long skirt, make a hole in the ground and bleed there allowing your fluid to go down directly into mother earth. You can stay in a squatting position or lean your back vertically against a tree. Allow yourself to vibrate with the pulse of mother earth.

happens very often with babies and toddlers. There are different amulets of protection in each culture.

⁵ Montecino, S. (1995). *Sol viejo, sol vieja. Lo femenino en las representaciones Mapuches*. Santiago de Chile: SernaM - Colección “Mujeres en la cultura chilena”, p. 35 [not available in English].

- Make an altar with elements of power to honour the strength of renewal and the creation of a new cycle. Light red candles and put pictures of the women of your lineage who represent strength. You can also place some other elements from mother earth: flowers, feathers, stones, and seeds, among other objects which you feel connect you to your own nature.
- Set up a circle of women or start a *red tent* in order to share experiences. Open your heart to those women and let them love you as well. Brush and braid your hair, dance, sing, and caress your hearts-wombs.
- Make a bag of seeds and herbs with relaxing and anti-inflammatory properties to shelter your sacred womb. You will need a piece of cotton fabric (an old sock or a sleeve from a shirt /sweater will do). Put the seeds (rice seed, flaxseed, and oats) and dried flowers (lavender, rose petals, boldo leaves and orange skin) and sew it up. The amounts of each item will depend on the size of the bag that you want to make. Warm it up in the microwave or with an iron for two minutes and then put it on your womb or back when necessary.
- Take a break from your connection with technology for at least a couple of hours. Turn off the switch that connects you to the internet world of work and rest or just take a nap!
- Make art with your blood! Create a design painted with your blood or printed on sheets of paper, fabric, or natural elements.
- Treat yourself to places of peace, love, and pleasure. Orgasms through masturbation also work because they relax your uterus. This practice has been shown to alleviate cramps and tensions when menstruation comes.

- Activate your moon-creative potential: write, paint, illustrate, sing, or compose music.
- Use the moonlight to recharge your energies. If you do not menstruate in new moon (black moon) walk and lie naked under the silvery rays of the moon, and let the light penetrate your skin.
- If you do not own a menstrual sash, you can weave yours. The first days of your cycle is a good moment to start. It will also give you a moment of rest.

YOUR BLOOD IS NOT WASTE - RECYCLE IT!

The most popular methods of hygiene currently used by women around the world to receive menstrual blood are sanitary pads and disposable tampons, both made with chemical components highly hazardous to our health. They contain: rayon, dioxins, asbestos, and polyacrylate, among other toxic substances that remain in our vagina and, in the case of tampons, absorb not only blood but other fluids which are required for the balance of vaginal flora.

The chemical remains, housed in our vagina and cervix during menstruation, stimulate the appearance of certain bacteria, causing infections or even toxic shock syndrome (TSS). This syndrome is a vaginal infection due to prolonged use of tampons that can cause fever, muscle ache, fatigue, and in some cases even death.

It has been proven that blood contains stem cells (Endometrial Regenerative Cells - ERC) which are able to regenerate wounds and heal diseases. Stem cells are also found in bone marrow and umbilical cords. In the world of traditional midwives, it is common to use and save the placenta because

of its potential as medicine. The umbilical cord is extracted from it and saved to be used as future medicine for the child in case of respiratory diseases.

Menstrual blood has been used as medicine to heal wounds since ancient times. A passage in the book *Mutant Message Down Under* by Marlo Morgan relates how an Australian indigenous tribe who crossed the desert for three months, used menstrual blood to regenerate broken bones and wounds. *The healing woman* in the group was responsible for collecting the blood in special tubes made of plants. The blood was stored, protected, and ready to use in case of need.⁶

Our menstrual blood, that we tend to throw away, offers a high source of nutrients to Mother Earth. We can mix it with water to dilute its power and then use it to water plants.

Several generations of women have used sanitary pads and tampons. We have not only polluted our bodies but also our planet. Our blood cannot be a source of pollution. Our grandmothers can share their experiences with the use of cotton cloth, one of the most common and oldest methods which many women continue to use, and others have started to use again. This method breaks with the prevailing paradigm and guides us towards knowing and becoming familiar with our blood and connecting more deeply with our sacred menstruation. There are also some other alternative methods like the *menstrual cup*, a small silicone container, that can be inserted into the vagina to receive the blood (it does not absorb it) and removed for emptying within a few hours. Whichever you choose, I invite you to learn about them.

⁶ Morgan, M. (1991). *Mutant Message Down Under*. New York: Harper Collins.

MOON ACTION: *KUYENTÚN*

Menstruation and the constant movement of the moon mean the same for Mapuche people in their language, Mapudungun: *Kuyentún* [action of the moon: cyclical and everlasting process –*tún*– and of the moon –*kuyen*–].⁷

Our time of menstrual bleeding is one of the moments in which it becomes most evident that we are passing through a cycle that sets the tone for a constant *fincipio*.⁸ As many other creatures dwelling on Earth, we experience a cyclical nature second-by-second.

Energy and sex hormones move and play about as they co-exist inside us: estrogen, progesterone, follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), luteinizing hormone (LH). “Sex hormones affect our entire body but sex organs lead the action.”⁹

We change like the tides, the seasons, plants, and the movements of the moon do. During our child-bearing age, we circularly move through four major stages: premenstrual, menstrual, pre-ovulation, ovulation, and again premenstrual and so on until the arrival of menopause.

Many transformations take place in each of these stages. We should pay attention to them, trying to understand each one of them more deeply and act according to the energy of each phase.

We will review each of these four major phases, from a biological point of view to the world of images and energies that inhabit us. I recommend the use of medicinal plants for

⁷ Mora Penroz (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁸ Translators note: “Fincipio” is not part of the Spanish lexicon. It is made-up word, a combination of the words *end* (fin) and *beginning* (principio).

⁹ Salvia Ribera, A. (2013). *Viaje al ciclo menstrual*. Barcelona: Author’s edition, p. 21 [not available in English].

every moment of the cycle. Every woman should be aware of the phase of the moon, and the seasonal and archetypical energy that each phase represents, while also incorporating good habits like physical exercises and a healthy diet.

Every human being on this planet is a unique creature and every woman lives their menstrual cycle in a particular manner according to their specific context. This information is only a reference. No woman should doubt her feeling or her own rhythm. If, for example, you do not bleed in new moon or full moon, you are not necessarily “unbalanced”. Each one of us perceives and inhabits the world differently, plus each cycle will be influenced by our emotions, work pace, food, sex life, hormones, drugs, and personal situation, among other factors. This is why some women can menstruate every twenty days and others every thirty-five.

We will use a twenty-eight day cycle only *as an example*, starting at the new moon, just to illustrate the stages we go through. Each woman should track her cycle and its duration in order to identify the different stages and connect with them.



SUPPLEMENTS FOR YOUR CYCLE

ARCHETYPES

Identification with images is an important part in the construction of our reality. Knowing about mythology gives us a starting point and a guide on our path.

We use the archetypes every woman encounters in her life (the Maiden, the Mother, the Enchantress, and the Crone) so that these images help us represent the energies of each phase of our cycle.¹⁰

SEASONS

We change as seasons do. Mother Earth, with all her natural patterns, constantly transforms and renews, and seasons are a reflection of this circular system. We walk through different climates and temperatures, positions, and levels of brightness. Naturally, food and plants follow this rhythm spontaneously by blooming, ripening, seeding, and lessening their rhythm in preparation for a new cycle. We see how in modern agriculture the natural food cycle is altered to give greater productivity to the market, disrupting the genes and eroding the land through monoculture.

It is said that altering or resisting change causes imbalances. Heraclitus said in IV b.C: “No man ever steps in the same

¹⁰ These archetypes and phases are found in the book *Red Moon. Understanding and Using the Gifts of the Menstrual Cycle*, by Miranda Gray (Rockport, MA: Element Books, 1994), and based on mythology and folktales. The four archetypes we have chosen are based on this work, but named according to the Mapuche wisdom.

river twice". We should not act like passengers, but like the pilots of this great journey. Following the example of the seasons and incorporating their energies into our lives can help us to connect even more with each phase that we experience. Incorporate seasonal energies into your menstrual cycle and flow with them.

MOON

The moon, in its constant cosmic dance, moves through different stages of light and darkness, waxing and waning. We are influenced by its movements as the tides, crops, sowings, menstrual cycle, and every living thing on earth are. In communities where there is no electricity, women tend to menstruate at the new moon and ovulate at the full moon. Due to the effect of light on our hormonal system, Louis Lacey started to use in 1971 the expression *lunaception*, based on a study carried out on the influence of light on our cycle.

She could control her fertility and cycle by resting at night in complete darkness without electricity, without even a small phone or watch. And during the three days of full moon she used to sleep with a dim light on (simulating the light of full moon), causing her to ovulate during those days and thus regulate her cycle and menstruate on new moon. This is just one example of how the movements of the moon are linked to our cycles.

To represent each phase, we will use a cycle where menstruation begins on new moon and the ovulation occurs on full moon. But do not worry if your cycle is different, menstruating on full moon and ovulating on new moon. You will experience a menstruation at the full moon differently than at the new moon due to the distinct energies of these stages.

Therefore, you must be attentive to the movements of the moon, because it influences every phase you transit.

GODDESSES

As a guide to help you connect with your cycle stages, I will also use the mythical world of goddesses. I will include these archetypes and match them to the energies of our cycle. I recommend doing some research on the energy of each goddess for each of your stages. Say prayers and sing songs in their names. You do not need to ask anything from them, ask what you need from yourself.¹¹

MEDICINAL PLANTS

Our native peoples say that the spirit of plants is what has healing powers. Use them wisely as a food that nourishes, cleanses, and heals. They are good company throughout our cycle. At times, we will need them more than at other times. However, do not forget to ask them and thank them every time you use them.

To learn more about the ways of preparation, please review chapter V, which is about medicinal plants.

DIET¹²

Air, water, light, and food are our nutrients. What we eat is fundamental to our vitality. Proof of this can be seen the

¹¹ This classification is based on the different works of Jean Shinoda Bolen, Miranda Gray and Silvia Selowsky, who have conducted research on the goddesses and their archetypes.

¹² Check the box at the end of this chapter where you'll find a guide on food for the entire cycle made by a nutrition expert.

moment our health lapses because of living in places with polluted air or without sunlight, or eating harmful foods. Many diseases and ailments are caused by a poor and unbalanced diet. As it represents a big influence on our energy and mood, we will review some dietary recommendations for each phase of your cycle.

EXERCISES

A sedentary lifestyle is another evil that concerns modern society. A lifestyle focused on productivity causes us to experience high levels of stress. Lack of physical activity causes the stagnation of our energies, and the atrophy of our vital organs. It is impossible to prescribe a general exercise routine for each phase of our cycle because every one of them should be studied in a particular way. I suggest you to create your own exercise routines. Take your body and energy into consideration and be consistent with them.

THE FOUR PHASES OF OUR CYCLICAL ENERGY

A twenty eight day cycle will be used to exemplify every phase and its duration. I highly recommend organizing your phases depending on the duration of your own cycle.



MENSTRUAL STAGE

Day 1 to 5 (or until the blood runs out). The first day of menstruation is known as the first day of the cycle. Bleeding occurs due to non-fertilization of the ovocyte, which has been released from the ovary to be fertilized. This release has caused the innermost layer of the uterus to be ready to

receive the placenta and the baby. When this does not happen, the inner layer is detached.

Two days before we see the first drop of blood, our energy changes and we start feeling the approaching menstruation. We can note that the Os (opening of the cervix) has opened its doors, softened its texture and aligned with the vagina for the lowering of the blood. If you examine yourself internally, you may notice that a few drops of brown blood have already started to fall and remain around your cervix.

During these days, intense energetic movements are generated from our uterus to shed its previous layer. The energy is concentrated in the pituitary gland and our womb focuses all its energy to bring it down to earth. We feel it in our mental and emotional state acutely. If you can connect with this fact, you will walk wisely with your menstruation.

Archetype

The crone stage [*kalku*] or rather wise woman [*kimche domo*], which relates to a moment of introspection, vision, and renewal. In accordance with this somewhat passive energy, it is an excellent opportunity to take a break and connect with our *kimche domo* for meditation and reflection, to slow down and live introspectively in the depths of our own being.

Season

Winter. This is a stage of shelter, of abundant liquid that must come from the body of Mother Earth. The tides go down, like our blood. It is a season where we need more heat and more hours of darkness, so we tend to rest a little more.



Moon

New moon. The black moon. We cannot see it with the naked eye; only when there is a total eclipse of the sun. It represents a stage of introspection. It is said to be a time of germination and planning. It is also a good time for the cleansing and renewing of energy.

Goddesses

Hecate, Inanna and Persephone, goddess of wisdom, intuition, the underworld, and the black moon.

Medicinal plants

These plants have anti-inflammatory and soothing properties, and they will accompany you along this period. They work on the digestive system, nervous system, and womb.

- *Yarrow*: infuse one teaspoon of yarrow leaves per cup of water. Drink up to two cups a day during your cycle.
- *Valerian*: drink its root decoction, up to three cups a day. It has relaxing effects. If you do not have the root, take it in the form of mother tincture in doses of 15 drops three times a day.
- *Nettle*: drink nettle infusion with dandelion to purify and compensate for blood loss.
- *Ginger*: drink it in tea or chew the rhizome. This helps reduce tension and cramping.

Diet

- Drink lots of water.
- Reduce intake of sugar, salt, and refined flour.
- Avoid having meat, cold cuts, and dairy.
- Prioritize potassium-rich foods such as legumes, wheat germ, peanuts, avocado, sesame seeds, nuts, etc. Potassium helps to regulate fluids in the body, as well as causing contraction or relaxation of muscles, preventing cramps.
- Eat iron-rich foods such as legumes, whole grains, nuts, and so on. When iron is of a non-animal origin, it should be mixed with foods rich in vitamin C to cause its absorption into the body.
- Eat diuretic foods, such as pineapples, watermelons, cucumbers, etc. They will help your urine production.
- Regularly eat green vegetables, soy products, and nutritional yeasts like what is used in beer.

Exercises

It is good to rest during this phase, at least for the first three days. Meditation is ideal for this time. If you are used to exercising or doing sports, do it with little demand, always respecting your own rhythm. If you usually practice yoga, do so but with the exception of the inverted postures or those that will require a lot of effort and cause imbalance. Some positions for menstrual cramps are recommended (perform them with full, long, and deep conscious breathing, relaxing the belly with exhalation, i.e. *Pranayama*).¹³

¹³ It is recommended to do these exercises for no more than two minutes each. In any case, ask your yoga teacher.

- *Pavanamuktasana*: wind-relieving pose. Lying on your back with knees drawn up. This pose invigorates the lumbosacral region, relieving pain.
- *Marjariasana*: Cat pose. Mix with cat-cow pose to relax the sacrum and cleanse your emotions.
- *Balasana*: Child’s pose. It relaxes and improves the functioning of your internal organs. When doing it, make enough room for your belly to hang comfortably.



PREOVULATORY STAGE

This is the time between menstruation and ovulation. Using the 28 day cycle as an example, we will place it from **day 6 to day 12**. This period is also known as *estrogenic* or *non-fertile phase*. The system begins to secrete a lot of estrogen due to the maturation of the follicle in the ovary which is preparing to exit. It is a variable period, so it can be extended or shortened depending on your processes. With that in mind, you must be attentive to your cycle: if it is short, lasting less than twenty five days, your fertile period (ovulatory) will happen before.

Archetype

This is the stage of the girl, the virgin, or the maiden [*malen*]. It is a period of growth, of bright and radiant energy. It is a very inspiring stage, with a lot of physical and intellectual activity. It is a good moment to let yourself open up because during this time we have powerful energies to achieve current and new projects. The word “maiden” comes from “owner “: it is the time of independence, an ideal moment for revitalizing your inner wild child.

Season

Spring. It is the moment of light, abundant blossoming, and energy that rises to the treetops. Like them, we have abundant body energy and light for creativity.

Goddesses

Kalfumalen, Artemis, Diana, and Medeina, who represent the girls living in the forests and protecting animals from hunters. They are the wild and free maidens, guardians of nature.



Moon

Crescent. This is the appearance of the moon in its half. It is a stage of growth, in which we have a lot of energy and creativity, an ideal moment to undertake new projects from working in the garden to getting a new haircut. Everything that starts in this moon phase will have guaranteed success in the phase of the full moon during the same month.

Medicinal plants

This is the moment when we prepare to ovulate. The following herbs can accompany you during this process:

- *Raspberry leaves:* infusion of a spoonful of dried leaves per cup. Drink three cups daily.

For balancing the body after the blood loss we experience during menstruation:

- *Raw dandelion leaves* in salads or fresh juice of its leaves.

If you suffer from heavy periods, use one of the following herbal mixtures to restore heavy blood loss:

- *Mugwort, nettle, and yarrow*: infusion of equal parts. Drink up to three cups a day, for five days right after bleeding has finished.
- *Plantain*: boil plantain leaves with fig leaves for five minutes in a litre of water. Drink up to three cups a day for three days right after bleeding has finished.
- *Matico*: infusion of a spoonful of dried leaves per cup. Drink up to three cups a day for three days right after bleeding has finished.

In support of a natural contraceptive method, this is the time to use the following herbs:

- *Rue, bayberry, and nettle*: infusion of equal parts. Drink up to three cups a day from the day menstruation ends until ovulation finishes (during the three days of ovulation you should increase the doses).

Diet

- Drink lots of water.
- Reduce the intake of salt, sugar, and refined flour.
- Eat sesame seeds in your salads, vegetable pates, sauces, or milk because they are high in protein and calcium.
- Eat unpeeled fruit including citrus, grapes, and cherries.
- Incorporate two handfuls of fresh alfalfa seeds into your diet every day during this stage.

Exercises

We are full of energy in this period, so we can carry out any physical activity (yoga, dancing, sports, etc.). However, you must not exceed your limits. Try not to use up all your strength alone in this period, be consistent throughout your cycle.

This stage is the right moment to use your energy and try out a new sport that you have not practiced before, taking advantage of your strength and security in this phase.



OVULATORY STAGE

Day 13 to day 16. Ovulation occurs within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. At that time, the ovum is released from the ovary. Then, if it is not fertilized, it dies in the uterine tube.

Day 14 is often considered as “peak fertility day” in a twenty-eight day cycle. However, sperm can live between three to five days with the help of cervical mucus in the female organs. This means that a woman can get pregnant up to five days before ovulation, or even two days later, because the egg is ready to capture the sperm.

Our estrogen level has reached its peak and the luteinizing hormone has been activated, which causes mature eggs to burst out of the ovary to make their way through the oviduct. Our cervix is already prepared to receive the sperm, so it opens and moisturizes, secreting cervical mucus to help and protect sperm so it can survive and head towards the oviducts.

If you want to know the date of your ovulation, I recommend to register the exact date of the first day of your period for three months and thereby make an estimate of how long your entire cycle lasts. For example, if it lasts twenty-eight days, your fertile day is the 14th, but if your cycles last thirty

or thirty-five days, you must subtract fourteen days back to know the date of your ovulation from last month, because the second part of the cycle –after ovulation– remains unchanged. In short, ovulation will always occur fourteen days before the next period comes.

During this stage, our body temperature rises, we experience more sexual desire, our skin and hair are usually shinier, and our energies tend to express what we feel and what is happening to us.

Archetype

This is the stage of the mother [*nūke*]. It is the period of greatest fertility. Because of our fruitful capacity, it is symbolized with the image of the mother, not only procreative but also as a symbol of abundance, containment, and nutrition. As Mother Earth, we are generous and welcoming. At this stage we reload expressive energies, we feel beautiful and full of creative ideas to give birth to. It is a good time to balance the expression and the support with those around you now.

Season

Summer. Period of time with plenty of light, heat, and abundance. We are fertile like the land, which is a metaphor for giving birth to ideas and children. We feel able to express and interact more with the outside world.



Moon

Full. It is the half point of the lunar month. In this phase, the sun and the moon are in opposite positions, and the moon acts as a mirror that reflects all the sunlight. It is a stage of flowering, ripening, and harvesting of our fruits. This is a

good moment to reap what was planted in the new moon. At the same time, it is a very sensitive stage.

Goddesses

Pachamama, Tonatzin, Gaia, and Demeter, goddesses that represent fertility and the great universal Mother.

Medicinal plants

In this period you can relax and just drink infusions that fit your energies or needs.

If you need help and do not want a pregnancy, you can rely on the following herbs:

- *Wormwood, rue, borage and yarrow*: make an infusion using equal parts of each herb. Drink three cups a day for five days.

Note: Review chapter X on fertility if you need further information.

If you want to boost your libido, you can drink infusions of the following plants:

- *Cinnamon*: put a handful of it in a litre of sweet wine for ten days (macerated) and drink two small glasses a day before and during ovulation.
- *Clove*: make infusion with two or three cloves in a cup of boiling water. Let it soak twenty minutes. Drink one or two cups a day.
- *Ginger*: Grate a good amount of fresh root, add water and boil it, covered, for twenty minutes. Take a small cup of tea after meals.
- *Rosemary*: make an infusion. Drink two or three cups per day.

*Diet*¹⁴

- Reduce the intake of sugar, salt, and refined flours.
- Avoid sodas and trans fat.
- Increase the intake of unsaturated fat.
- Eat almonds, pistachios, and pine nuts.
- Eat vegetable proteins.
- Eat only whole grains.
- Incorporate high doses of iron.

Exercises

During this period you can increase the intensity of the activities you did during the previous phase. Doing Yoga, Tai Chi, or Chi Kung will make you feel good. Move your body softly but intensely, expressing all the abundance and fertility of this period. Dancing, spiral dance, belly dancing, or salsa are very positive to mobilize our uterus.



PREMENSTRUAL STAGE

Day 17th to the first day of menstruation. “If there is no fertilization, the follicle in the ovary is named ‘corpus luteum’ and it begins to secrete progesterone”.¹⁵

The inner wall of the uterus, the endometrium, has grown to receive the fertilized egg and during this period is thick and full of nutrients. When there is no fertilization, the body stops

¹⁴ These dietary recommendations are to assist in the process of ovulation and you can find them in the book *The Fertility Diet*, by Dr. Jorge Chavarro (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2008).

¹⁵ Salvia Ribera (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 21.

producing the FSH and LH hormones, so the corpus luteum stops producing estrogen and progesterone. The endometrium is shed, followed by menstruation, when not receiving hormonal stimulation.

This is a time of great creativity, although our energies gradually begin to decrease and our emotions intensify.

Archetype

This is the stage of the enchantress [*lawentuchefe*]. It is a period of change, intensity, and energy discharge, which refers to the wisdom of *medicine-women*, wise and aware of the healing properties of medicinal herbs [*lawen*]. It is also known as the stage of processing, or the alchemist. It is a time of renewal, ideal for cleansing bad energy around us.

Season

Autumn. Like trees in this season that change their leaves, this is an ideal time to renew ourselves, to relax quietly inside ourselves and slow down energies for the stillness of the next phase.



Moon

Waning. This is the moon that is decreasing to reach the black moon. This moon phase helps us to finish what began in the new moon; it is a stage of completion, disintegration, reorganization, descent, cleaning, reflection, and rest.

Goddesses

Kali, *Iansa*, *Lilith*, and *Aphrodite*, goddess of creation and destruction (*Kali*), of the ray (*Iansa*), powerful and free (*Lilith*) and of the transformation (*Aphrodite*).

Medicinal plants

The phase of the *lawentuchefe*, or *medicine-woman*, invites us to initiate the transformation within us. It is an ideal opportunity to purify ourselves, using the abundant energy and creativity around us.

- *Rosehips*, *canelo tree* and *matico*: make an infusion of equal parts. Drink up to three cups a day for as long as you feel it is necessary.

During this period, some women tend to be affected by several unpleasant symptoms that are often lumped together by modern medicine as premenstrual syndrome (PMS). It is a discomfort that works on many levels and affects every woman in different ways. We will talk about the most common unpleasant symptoms: mood swings, irritability, anxiety, addiction to sugar, tremors, bloating, breast tenderness, and weight gain.

The following herbs are recommended by Dr. Susan M. Lark, specialist in this syndrome, who advises the use of a mixture of infusion of burdock, ginger root, and sarsaparilla. In case of acne and oily skin, prepare an infusion of equal parts of dandelion, burdock root, and alfalfa, which should be drunk until the arrival of menstruation.¹⁶

¹⁶ In her 1990 *Premenstrual Syndrome Self-Help Book* (Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts), Dr. Lark recommended not to consume if following hormone treatment.

Diet

- Reduce intake of sugar, salt, and refined flours.
- Eliminate from your diet red meat, fried foods, soft drinks, and dairy products to detoxify your body.
- Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Detox your body drinking carrot juice on an empty stomach, at least for a week before menstruation, because it makes the blood more fluid, prevents cramps, and cleanses the body.
- Eat more foods high in vitamin A, such as carrots, pumpkin, salmon, dandelion leaves, mustard greens, beet leaves, peach, asparagus, and red pepper. This vitamin helps skin and prevent acne, a common condition at this stage.
- Incorporate foods high in vitamin B, which help strengthen and balance our metabolism. They are usually found in whole grains, brewer's yeast, liver, and legumes. We lose this vitamin due to stress.¹⁷
- Eat foods containing minerals such as calcium, magnesium, iodine, iron, zinc, potassium, and selenium.

Exercises

This is a phase of intense energies. You may feel like doing everything, but your body does not respond. It is great to do physical activity throughout the cycle, but at the same time do not over-push yourself so as to not cause imbalances. This is a good time for physical activities such as yoga or martial arts, to discharge intense energies and find balance.

¹⁷ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMBALANCES DURING THE CYCLE

The following recommendations are for frequent imbalances that may occur in your cycle. Although they are common, these symptoms may be the first manifestation of a more serious condition. You should see a specialist if, for example, your period becomes unbearably painful, or if your menstruation turns into heavy bleeding or disappears for more than a month. The first step is to know your cycle so you can recognize some of these imbalances.

HORMONAL IMBALANCES

Our hormones are sensitive. They are like a sea on which we sail; they keep the boat floating on the sea. If the sea is contaminated, or if a storm or flood occurs, it will affect us, no doubt about that. Chapters IX and X will provide more details on hormones.

Our menstruation may be unstable because it is affected by hormonal changes. That is why you should consider, as support for any treatment throughout your cycle, drinking infusions or taking capsules of the following medicinal plants that have traditionally been used to improve hormonal imbalances in women: *licorice*, *Tribulus*, *damiana*, *sarsaparilla*, *raspberry leaves*, and *wild yam*.¹⁸

ABSENCE OF PERIOD OR AMENORRHEA

This can occur because of various reasons, so it is not simple to find the cause. Ruling out that it is caused by pregnancy or breastfeeding, there may be many factors involved: stress,

¹⁸ *Ibíd.*

poor diet, excessive exercise, severe weight loss, hormonal disruption, abandonment of some hormonal contraception, etc., as well menopause and various diseases, which require follow-up with a specialist if the absence of menstruation continues for a prolonged period of time.

Stress and poor diet are causes that you should consider, so it is important that, beyond taking any medicinal herb to help you restore your cycle, you find out what is causing this imbalance so you can fix it once and for all.

Medicinal plants that help restore menstruation

- *Raspberry leaves*: a mother tincture from 30 to 100 drops per day, from the absence of menstruation until it starts. (This is to restore, not to induce.)
- *Calendula mother tincture*: 4 drops per day, or a daily cup of infusion of calendula flowers.
- *Motherwort*: decoction. Drink three cups a day for four or five days at most.
- *Tansy*: infusion of a spoonful of seeds and flowers per cup, three cups a day.
- *Sage*: infusion, three cups a day.
- *Triqui Triqui*: infusion, three cups a day.
- *Lavender*: infusion of a spoonful of dried flowers per cup, three cups a day.

Dietary recommendations

- Use the food recommendations we have mentioned for your cycle.

- Increase iron consumption: mainly absorbed from animal foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and seafood which contain an iron category called *heme iron*, easily absorbed for the body. However, you can also find it in seeds, fruits, and vegetables. These have non-heme iron, which is difficult to assimilate and must be transformed to create red blood cells, so you have to consume it with food high in vitamins A, C, and beta-carotene, such as chard, spinach, raisins, and oranges, among others. This is why our grandmothers recommend eating lentils mixed with orange juice.

EXCESSIVE BLEEDING

Bleeding is considered excessive when it lasts more than seven days or is abundant, with very large clots. It is important to find out what is causing it. This may be a warning of a deeper imbalance which has yet to be detected. For women using an intrauterine device (IUD), this can provoke heavier bleeding. It can also be due to cervical polyps, pelvic infections, uterine fibroids, ovarian cysts or thyroid problems, among others. If not addressed in time, this excessive bleeding can cause anaemia, due to the great loss of blood.

Medicinal plants

- *Raspberry leaves*: make an infusion of a spoonful of dried leaves per cup. Drink three cups for long periods.
- *Cinnamon, cloves, lemon and honey*: mix of equal parts in a litre of water, cooking for five minutes. Drink three cups during menstruation.

- *Nettle*: Make juice with fresh leaves to drink it. It is a vaso-constrictor and prevents anaemia. Drink it on an empty stomach. Also drink its infusion.
- *Plantain*: make a decoction (for five minutes) of leaves, mixed with fig leaves in a litre of water. Drink up to three cups daily.
- *Matico*: make an infusion of a spoonful of dried leaves per cup. Drink three cups a day.
- *Silversmith grass*: make an infusion of a spoonful of dried herb per cup. Drink up to two cups a day during menstruation.
- *Geranium*: make an infusion of a spoonful of dried herb per cup. Drink three cups during menstruation.

Dietary recommendations

- Use the food recommendations we have mentioned for your cycle.
- Eat foods high in vitamin C, sesame seeds (high in calcium), grapes, cherries, unpeeled citrus fruit such as grapes, cherries, oranges, etc. Eat two handfuls of fresh alfalfa seeds every day throughout the cycle (alfalfa has anti-haemorrhagic effect, plus vitamins A, C, E, and K, and beta-carotene, thiamine, riboflavin, B complex, and folic acid).

PAINFUL PERIOD

Knowing and reconnecting with our menstrual cycle is an effective tool for self-healing. Pain during menstruation has several origins, mainly social and cultural. That is why every woman should look into their own history and cleanse herself

of all imposed pains. Honor and love your body, blood, and uterus. This is the first step to start the healing process.

Some women may have their uterus inverted (retroverted uterus), which can cause them great pain when menstruating. Also, severe pain may originate from pelvic infections or endometriosis.

Emotional balance, constant physical activity and healthy eating will be key in helping this condition.

Medicinal plants

- *Anise*: make an infusion of a half teaspoon of seeds per cup. Drink two cups a day.
- *Rosemary*: make an infusion of a spoonful of fresh leaves or half spoon of dried leaves per cup. Drink two cups a day.
- *Chamomile*: make an infusion of a spoonful of flower heads per cup. Drink three cups a day. Or use mother tincture, up to 10 drops, twice a day.
- *Yarrow*: make an infusion of two teaspoons of dried herb in a quart of water. Start drinking a week before menstruation and continue during bleeding. Drink two cups a day.
- *Raspberry leaves*: make an infusion of a spoonful of leaves per cup. Drink three cups a day.

Dietary recommendations

- Use the food recommendations we have mentioned for your cycle.
- Try not to eat animal protein and dairy products.
- Avoid salt, sugar, and refined products (white flour and white bread)

- Eat high potassium foods throughout your period: fruit juice, cantaloupe, oranges, green vegetables and potatoes, plus dandelion leaves for their diuretic and pelvic decompression functions.
- Incorporate high magnesium foods. This mineral has multiple properties, and it is essential for our health. It improves menstrual pain. You can find it in cocoa, whole grains (unrefined), oats, corn, spinach, pollen, and wheat germ, among others.
- Eat dark green and orange vegetables frequently, before and during your menstrual period.
- Chew ginger rhizome: it dilates blood vessels and helps relaxation of uterine muscles.
- Consume foods high in vitamin A: lettuce, spinach, carrots, squash, garlic, onions, and peaches, among others. They will help to reduce stress.
- Incorporate high calcium foods: sesame seeds, seaweed, almonds, wheat, oats, hazelnuts, and dandelion, among others. They will help to reduce tension and cramps.

Exercises

- Hot baths: Put a hot water bottle or a bag of anti-inflammatory and relaxing seeds on the belly.
- Move your pelvis circularly and crawl on the floor to distend the sacral area.
- Give yourself orgasms. It will help to reduce pain and reduce stress.
- Rest and be calm for as much time as you need.

FOOD IN THE CYCLE OF WOMEN

All women have a biological clock, responsible for the rhythmicity of the cycles. As we saw, this cycle consists of four stages: preovulatory, ovulatory, premenstrual, and menstrual. The FSH and LH hormones are key in these four phases. Below, there is an explanatory table of these stages and how we can help regulate our cycle through food.

PREOVULATORY STAGE (OR FOLLICULAR)	
Release of the egg to the uterus	
HORMONE RELEASED	FSH. Its function is the growth of the follicle, which then becomes an egg.
	Estrogen-estradiol: hormone that promotes follicular growth and maturation of oocytes, which will soon be released.
FOOD	Include phytoestrogens such as soy, olive oil, olives, celery, barley, broccoli, cherries, and plums because they contain natural estrogens.
OTHERS	Include foods with tryptophan, the amino acid precursor of serotonin, as this regulates estrogen levels: pasta, rice, cereals, and legumes.

OVULATORY STAGE		
Release of the egg into the uterus.		
HORMONE RELEASED	Estrogens are increasing. Progesterone starts increasing.	LH hormone initiates the process of ovulation.
		Progesterone begins to increase; the endometrium prepares for the reception and embryo implantation. There is also a decrease in estrogen.
FOOD	Include foods that naturally regulate and increase progesterone: meat; foods high in zinc, such as legumes and meats; potatoes and foods high in vitamin B6, such as nuts, whole grains, and whole wheats.	
OTHERS	Include avocado, corn oil, legumes, and nuts, as they contain high levels of sterols, compounds similar to cholesterol which help reduce its absorption. They also have the function of blocking absorption of estrogen and promote that of progesterone, helping to regulate this stage of the cycle.	



PREMENSTRUAL (OR LUTEAL)	
<p>Release of the mature egg, which may or may not be fertilized. The beginning of what is known as “premenstrual syndrome” or premenstrual manifestations.</p>	
HORMONE RELEASED	LH
	<p>Peak in progesterone increase. This produces sodium and water retention in the kidneys, which is reflected in the accumulation of fluid in the breasts and a small increase in weight.</p>
FOOD	<p>Avoid red meat, sausages, and saturated fatty acids (butter, cheese, fried foods) because they affect the inflammatory system. Also avoid caffeine and protein because they increase nervousness and anxiety.</p>
	<p>Include in your diet foods with Omega 3 for its anti-inflammatory effect (fish, nuts, and almonds), plus high-fiber foods to avoid constipation (leafy greens, beets, corn, and whole grains).</p>
OTHERS	<p>Between 40 and 90% of women have edema in varying degrees at this stage. Food like salt must be avoided as it helps with fluid retention, increasing the percentage of edema.</p>



MENSTRUAL STAGE	
Shedding of the endometrium, which causes bleeding. Day 1 of the cycle	
HORMONE RELEASED	Increased FSH.
FOOD	<p>In this phase, due to the bleeding, hemoglobin decreases (oxygen-carrying protein). You should increase consumption of foods containing heme iron, which can be found in foods of animal origin (meat and eggs) and non-heme iron, found in vegetables (leafy greens). These must be accompanied by foods high in vitamin C to increase bioavailability in absorption.</p> <p>You should also eat foods that contain potassium to decrease contractions, such as oranges, artichokes, and parsley, and others with Omega 3 for its anti-inflammatory effects, such as fish, nuts, and almonds.</p>
OTHERS	Banana consumption is not recommended, despite its high potassium content, since it is an astringent food, which can produce constipation. Also, avoid dairy because, in general, it produces swelling. Cheese is also an astringent food.

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