



Menstrual Cramps

Remedies, Reality, and Relief

It is typical for men to have a hard time grasping the concept of menstrual cramps. Most men's experiences with the issue centers around fetching Advil, chocolate, and a heating pad for their loved one. We simply don't experience anything comparable to relate. Menstrual cramps, medically known as dysmenorrhea, are categorized as either primary or secondary. Primary dysmenorrhea is the most common form of menstrual cramps, and is not accompanied by any physical pathology. Secondary dysmenorrhea is a physical issue and is usually caused by an underlying factor such as endometriosis or uterine fibroids. Symptoms of dysmenorrhea include lower abdominal pain, low back pain, hip and leg pain, bloating, headaches, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, dizziness, constipation, and diarrhea. Over 50% of women are effected noticeably, and about 15% are effected severely. Remedies range from high doses of Advil to hot packs and yoga.

Why are menstrual cramps so painful? The cause of the pain is primarily the contraction of the uterus as it sheds off its thickened lining. Estrogen acts to thicken the lining or endometrium in preparation for the possibility of a fertilized egg becoming implanted. When an unfertilized egg passes through the uterus, it contracts and casts off the lining. In the process, a chemical called prostaglandin is released. Prostaglandin helps to aid the process, but it can also increase inflammation and contractions. This cycle continues monthly, regulated by the changing levels of estrogen and progesterone.

Studies show that chiropractic adjustments are extremely efficient in helping to relieve the symptoms of dysmenorrhea. But patients don't need studies to prove their experiences, and usually when these patients are adjusted just prior to their cycle they have little to no pain during menstruation. Shelby is a classic example of a patient who gets fantastic results. Her pain was debilitating enough for her to miss work every month on the first day of her cycle. She would stay home with hot packs on her abdomen and lower back, taking four Advil every eight hours. Her pain usually lasted an average of five days. Shelby says that ever since receiving chiropractic adjustments, there is virtually no discomfort. She also states that since her first treatment, it is possible for her to miss a future treatment without experiencing any pain during the menstrual cycle. The likely

reason for such effectiveness of lower back adjustments is that the nerves of this region also service the uterus and ovaries. Increasing the mobility of the lower back and lower spine has a direct effect upon these nerves. Normal motion of the vertebrae runs an important pain inhibitory pathway within the nervous system. It is the same process that occurs when someone rubs their elbow to relieve pain after it has been bumped.

Another highly successful mode of relief is a session of active release technique, or ART. This is an amazing hands on technique that removes scar tissue or fibrous adhesion within muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Adhesion shortens these tissues and is a source of pain and dysfunction. They create a constant pull, causing the vertebrae to go out of alignment. This results in necessary recurrent adjustments, and can be quite a hassle. A few sessions of ART and patients don't have to continually return for weekly adjustments. Their adjustments will last for long periods of time. This treatment is incredible for many different conditions such as headaches, shoulder pain, arm and hand pain, lower back pain, hip and leg pain, and knee, ankle, or foot pain. Although it may sound too good to be true, patients have been extremely pleased with the results.

For more information regarding the relief of menstrual cramps, you can contact Dr. Jeff Hansen, DC in Yorba Linda at 714-779-1605, www.hansenchiropractic.com ▲