



CYCLES OF LIFE

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With the arrival of Spring we see a blossoming of new life, an awakening after the quiet of winter. Spring is the beginning of a new cycle; a seasonal cycle within which we see reflected aspects of our birth, growth and development. The seasons are similarly reflected in our daily cycle – we awaken in the morning as new blossoms in spring, our activities gather momentum towards the summer noon and the autumn afternoon then wanes into the quiet of the winter evening time. The waxing and waning of our daily energy reminds us the waxing and waning of the lunar cycle, another cycle of impact on our lives, especially in the lives of women.

Within the framework of Oriental medicine one often hears the terms yin and yang. Yin corresponds to the female energy of receptivity and to the quiet energy of winter, a time of potential that we see burst forth in the spring. The new moon is considered a yin time and corresponds to ovulation, the most receptive time of the month when conception is possible. Yang corresponds to the dynamic energy of summer, a time full of activity and an energy similar to that felt during the full moon. At this time energy has gathered internally as well as externally and when this energy flows appropriately so the menstrual blood will flow without incidence. However, with the gathering of so much energy there is the possibility of inappropriate movement that results in many of the menstrual problems that we now consider to be a normal part our monthly cycle. Just because it has become the norm does not mean that it is a normal or healthy way to be.

A healthy menstrual cycle is approx 28 ± 4 days (including 5 days menstruation). A

normal period is not too heavy / not too light, painless with no clots, begins clearly, heavier for the 1st day or so, and then wanes to end clearly. Only observation of the lunar cycle should indicate the arrival one's period: not the various signs and symptoms of Pre Menstrual Syndrome. These are an indication some level of imbalance within the body. Early, delayed or irregular cycles are similarly a sign of imbalance.

Oriental Medicine, by a combination of acupuncture and herbs, can easily address these imbalances. It often takes around 3 menstrual cycles to set right but progress is noticeable during this time particularly through the sympto-thermal charts used to monitor basal body temperature changes together with all other signs and symptoms that arise during the month. Once the menstrual cycle is regulated many other cycles of life fall into place more easily including fertility or natural contraception. Oriental Medicine then supports women through the various stages of pregnancy and is beneficial for post-natal support as well as nurturing the healthy growth and development of babies and children.

Further to the monthly cycle, Oriental medicine recognises a larger cycle within women's lives. This is know as the cycle of seven and according to this cycle a woman should begin her menstrual cycle around the age of 14 years and complete her cycle, enter menopause, around 49 years of age. Precocious, or early onset of puberty, or delayed puberty can be addressed with acupuncture and herbs, as can many of the discomforts that arise on entering menopause.