

# Women's Hormones: A Guide to the Cycle and Infertility (Part 2)

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*Editor's Note:* Part [one](#) of this article was published last month and covers the follicular phase, treatment, and ovulation. This article will conclude Dr. Melnyk's series on women's health.

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## Phase Three

The third phase is referred to as the luteal phase, and is regulated by the Spleen Qi and Kidney Yang. The hyper thermal phase is marked by high body temperatures and lasts for about 14 days. After the rupture and release of the egg into the uterus, the follicle turns into corpus luteum and is now associated with the secretion of progesterone, that is known to regulated the processes in this phase. The progesterone has a heating effect on the body and can be rightly touted as Yang owing to its properties.

The basic functions of the progesterone are to ready the endometrium inside the uterus, facilitate a firm implantation of the egg that has been fertilized by the sperm, and also stimulate the blood capillaries present in the uterus to produce more blood for the uterine lining.

Owing to the domination of the Yang energies, the luteal phase is associated with a higher BBT as compared to the lower temperatures of the follicular phase. In case, your luteal phase stays on for a shorter period of time than normal, there might be chances of insufficient levels of Spleen Qi or Kidney Yang in the body.

In order to deal with the deficiency of progesterone in an impaired luteal phase, the body can be provided with Kidney Yang and Spleen Qi supplements that will stimulate the production and functioning of the hormone. If a woman has not conceived, and still experiences tenderness in her breasts, she might be suffering from Qi stagnation.

Also if there is any spotting in this phase, it might be indicative of pathological heat, Blood stasis or Qi deficiency. Now if the woman has conceived, the embryo stimulates the corpus luteum with a hormone called human chorionic gonadotropin to produce more progesterone and maintain the thickness of the uterine lining.

On the other hand, if the pregnancy does not occur, there is no production of hCG, and consequently due to lack of any activation, the corpus luteum dies. As a result, the level of progesterone gets diminished and the uterine lining dissolves.

Stagnation in the Liver Qi can be associated with impaired transitions from the follicular phase up to the luteal phase and a consequent defect in the fertility of the body. The pathological symptoms of a stagnant Liver Qi are excessive levels of estrogen and prolactin in the blood stream that would otherwise be metabolized into energy by the Liver Qi.

## Phase Four

In the absence of a pregnancy, the body automatically switches back to the premenstrual phase towards the end of the luteal phase. In this phase, the Liver Qi zaps back into an activated state and converts the Yang back into the Yin. The length of this phase varies greatly according to the bodily composition of an individual, and can last from anywhere between two days and a week.

As soon as the Yang is converted into the Yin by the Liver Qi, the corpus luteum stops producing the progesterone, and results in the lowering of the body temperature. In order to facilitate a proper transformation in this phase, it is essential for your Blood and Qi to have an inhibited circulation through the body.

Due to an inhibition of these energies, you might experience a variety of health problems such as bloating, diarrhea, constipation, cramping, insomnia, irritability, headaches, dizziness, vaginal irritation, night sweats, edema, depression, nosebleeds and even eating disorders. A perfectly balanced Liver Qi in the premenstrual phase not only helps in preventing the aforementioned problems, but also contributes to a healthy functioning of the body.

## Phase Five

The final phase of the menstrual cycle involves actual menstruation or expulsion of blood from the body as waste. The first day of the blood flow marks the beginning of the resting phase for the energies and goes on for a period of three to seven days.

The endometrium or the uterine lining is broken down by the enzymes and is excreted from the body with blood. Typically, the first three days of the period involves little or no major hormonal activity in the body, which is again kick started from the fourth day onwards.

Since this period requires the body to restore its vigor and health, it is advisable not to go for any treatments during the first three days of the period. As per TCM, it is also advisable to refrain from any strenuous activities such as intercourse in the first three days of the menstruation and allow your body complete rest.

Although, our modern day lifestyles rarely offer us the luxury of complete rest during our period, it is a good idea to try and keep your activity to a minimum during this phase. Given the fact, that it reflects the health of your reproductive system, the menstrual blood is an effective indicator of any ailments that might be associated with infertility.

A healthy woman with a regular menstrual cycle will have adequate flow that is neither too excessive nor too scanty. In addition to having minimal clots, your blood should be red in color and fluid like in consistency. The flow should abruptly stop at the end of your period, and there must not be any spotting thereafter.

A presence of excessive cramping or discomfort during your menstrual period might be indicative of some pathological issue such as Blood stasis or Qi deficiency. A stagnation of Qi might also cause bloating in some women. An extremely scanty blood flow might indicate that there is deficiency of estrogen in the follicular phase that promotes the build-up of the uterine lining. On the contrary, if the flow is excessive and goes on beyond the typical time period of a week, there might be some other problem which is causing abnormal bleeding.

## Possible Reasons for Abnormal Flow

There might be three different reasons for an abnormal flow of blood during the period. The first

reason might be a deficiency of Qi which is insufficient to regulate the menstrual cycle. Also, a condition called Blood stasis might cause profuse bleeding along with other symptoms such as clotting and cramping. The third reason behind abnormal menstruation can be a presence of excessive Yang or negligible Yin that will in turn cause the body temperatures to rise.

A condition called *amenorrhea*, where there is no menstruation at all, can occur due to a lack of blood in the body or an excess of something that is inhibiting the menstruation to occur normally. In case there is not enough blood in the clients' body, you must tonify it.

However, if the cycle is being inhibited as a result of Blood stasis, you must ensure to get it back into circulation. Our basic idea behind regulating the menstrual cycle is to tap the abilities of the dominant energies in all the phases and correct their impairments through TCM treatment. Similar to the fact that we require a balance of Yin and Yang energies to live a healthy life, we also need the stability for a proper functioning of our reproductive system.

Instead of bombarding the body with external supplements, the TCM treatment aims at triggering and stimulating the body's natural instinct to produce the hormones and endorphins in adequate amounts. The traditional Chinese medicine states that a balance of the energies of the spleen, liver and kidneys are crucial for a proper functioning of the uterus and the ovaries as well.

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