

Ask doc January 2017

Seed Cycling & PMS:

Introduction:

My patients often give me fresh insights in terms of what's new in medical care. A recent example was a patient who stated she found a "cure" for her PMS symptoms (PMS: Premenstrual Syndrome). She was in her early 40's and had major problems with cyclic mood swings, breast pain and other disturbing symptoms that typically started a week before the onset of her period.

I was intrigued since so many of my patients have similar problems. I asked her, "What is your secret"? She replied that "the answer is simple, "I started **Seed Cycling**". She briefly explained that by taking various combinations of seeds at different times in her menstrual cycle she was able to virtually eliminate her symptoms. I was skeptical, but made a note to do a Google search on the subject.

My initial response to the search reinforced my skepticism. However, after further consideration, I concluded that the concept may have merit and deserves additional consideration. Before commenting on the potential value of seed cycling I will briefly summarize how it works based on my Google review:

How it Works:

The basic concept of seed cycling assumes that PMS symptoms are caused by an imbalance and/or a deficiency of nutrients that support the metabolism of estrogen and progesterone. Restoring this balance is the key to relieving PMS symptoms.

The proponents of seed cycling correctly point out that there are two main phases of the menstrual cycle. The first half of the cycle is called the **follicular phase**, which starts with the first day of the menstrual period (bleeding) and ends on approximately day 15 at the time of ovulation. The main hormone at play during this initial phase of the menstrual cycle is **estrogen**.

The second half of the cycle is called the **luteal phase**. The luteal phase starts on day 15 (ovulation) and goes until the onset of the next menstrual cycle. The main hormone at play during this second phase of the cycle is **progesterone**.

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As the theory goes, a combination of seeds that are important in the metabolism of estrogen are added in the first phase of the cycle, and another combination of seeds that promote progesterone metabolism are added in the second phase. Additionally fish oil (high in omega 3-fatty acids) is added in phase one and Evening Primrose Oil (high in omega 6-fatty acids) is added in phase two.

Example:

Phase 1: Starts first day of menstrual cycle and continue daily until day 15:

- 1-2 tablespoons of organic, raw, ground flax seeds, pumpkin seeds, or whole chia seeds (all high in omega-3 fatty acids)
- Fish Oil: at least 3 grams of omega-3 fatty acids per day

Phase 2: Day 15 of the cycle and continue daily until onset of menstruation:

- 1-2 tablespoons of organic, raw, ground sesame and sunflower seeds (high in omega-6 fatty acids)
- Evening Primrose Oil (EPO) 500mg per day: high in gamma-linolenic acid (GLA: a member of the omega-6 family)

Discussion:

Although I remain skeptical about the details of “**how it works**”, I must admit that there is no downside to eating seeds, and there is the potential for benefit. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that adding seeds to the diet are likely to produce major health benefits, and that these benefits are likely to apply to both men and women.

Not only are seed nutritious, but they also play an important role in weight control. Eating more seeds would be a great New Year’s resolution for everyone. More details on the value of eating seeds will be reviewed in next month’s “Ask the Doctor” article.

Contact us at msprouse@beawarefoundation.org if you have questions or suggestions.