

RED DIAMOND SISTERS

Period-Friendly Foods & Recipes

TO FEEL GOOD EVERY DAY

by Meloney Hudson



Red Diamond Sisters

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This booklet is designed for suggested use only.
Before starting a new diet and nutritional supplementation,
be sure to consult your doctor.

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Red Diamond Sisters wants you to love your body every day!

Many of us don't feel so much personal power when we're curled up in bed with cramps and fatigue. We don't recommend you "power through" your period, and instead, suggest using food as medicine to ease your discomfort and refuel your energy.

Red Diamond Sisters emphasizes good health as a key to our personal power, and encourage healthy habits that deliver physical, mental and emotional health.

Period Friendly Foods and Recipes is a compilation of suggested foods, herbs, nutritional supplements that have been found to ease cramp discomfort. And these foods aren't just for your period, they're good for glowing health, high energy, and great moods every day.

This booklet includes food lists and period-friendly recipes for tasty, easy dishes that even newbie chefs could make.

It's written for women who've had their periods for years and girls who've just begun; for people who know their way around the kitchen and those who know only the basics.

So, let's get started. Adding these foods to your everyday eating is the first step to period comfort and glowing, good health every day.

Note: This book is designed to provide information and to inspire you to eat well. As with any health program, consult your doctor before beginning any new eating program or regimen with nutritional supplements. And if you regularly have irregular periods, heavy menstrual bleeding, or suffer from iron deficiency, consult a doctor for support.

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Part One

INTRODUCTION

WHY PERIODS CAN BE A PAIN

A healthy body is our greatest asset. A strong body supported by proper nutrition enables us to breeze energetically through life with ease and enthusiasm. Our body functions with stamina. Our mind thinks clearly. Our emotions maintain balance. Life is easier when our body operates optimally.

But even the healthiest of us can be sidelined by period discomfort. The headaches, constipation or diarrhea, fatigue, bloating, and cramping that come with before and during menstruation can distract us or slow us down. For many women, period problems are so debilitating it interferes with their lives.

Science has proven time and time again that proper nutrition contributes to optimal overall health, and this can lead to periods that are less crampy, gassy, and tiring.

Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician who lived in the 5th century BCE, and traditionally regarded as the father of medicine said, "Let thy food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food."

We follow Hippocrates' advice and have searched for foods that target the underlying issues that cause body discomfort. Eating these foods regularly, not just during your period, can help boost your energy, mental clarity, and mood, and reduce bloating, cramping, and other menstrual discomforts.

But before moving into the beneficial foods, let's understand a little bit about menstruation and menstrual cramps.

What exactly are cramps?

During our periods, most of us experience some cramping. Some of us glide through our periods with minor discomfort. Other women suffer from a condition called **dysmenorrhea**, which is a more serious pain during menstruation and includes:

- Cramping pain in the lower abdomen, back, or thighs
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Fatigue

Menstrual cramps are the result of contractions of the uterus, causing aches, throbbing, and spasms in the pelvic area and lower abdomen. As the uterus begins to shed at the start of your period, hormones called Prostaglandins cause the muscles and blood vessels of the uterus to contract.

Prostaglandins are not your friend

Prostaglandins are hormone-like molecules that cause uterine contractions that can lead to menstrual cramps. Prostaglandins play a role in painful inflammation that causes the uterus to contract during menstruation. They also constrict blood vessels in the uterus, all which contribute to cramps. The combination of high levels of prostaglandins and uterine contractions can trigger period pain.

Period pain can begin 1 to 2 days before bleeding occurs, and it may last a couple of days after bleeding has stopped. Period pain typically lessens as the days go on, since prostaglandin levels go down as the uterine lining is shed.

Inflammation

High levels of prostaglandins are caused by inflammation. And one cause of inflammation is a poor diet that is loaded with processed foods, meat, and dairy.

Inflammation is the body's response to a problem. It's a normal, important reaction that signals to the immune system that something is wrong, so it can then fight off infection or heal injuries. Inflammation plays a positive role in the body, when it's needed.

Acute inflammation is a sudden, short-lived response to an injury, like a cut on the skin, or the response to a bacterium, such as the one causing strep throat. Inflammation is a sign that the body is healing itself.

The inflammation that causes menstrual cramps is typically considered acute, because it is primarily caused by the release of prostaglandins from the uterine lining during the menstrual cycle. The inflammation acts as a signal to the body to contract the uterus more forcefully, resulting in increased pain.

Chronic inflammation is less friendly. With chronic inflammation, the body continues sending inflammatory cells even when there's no danger. Chronic inflammation can last months or years. The symptoms of chronic inflammation that you may experience now include:

- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Depression, anxiety and mood disorders
- Chronic constipation or diarrhea
- Skin rash
- Joint pain

Chronic inflammation is often caused by poor nutrition. The typical American diet is an inflammation-making machine, because it's full of processed foods and red meat, which cause inflammation.

Inflammation that is not addressed can lead to serious health problems, like rheumatoid arthritis, autoimmune diseases, gastrointestinal problems, like irritable bowel syndrome, and other conditions. So, for good health and reduced inflammation, we want to avoid inflammation *every day* of the month.

Good news, when our eating routines include healthy foods and reduce processed foods, from the diet and replacing it with whole foods can reduce inflammation and its symptoms.

Estrogen

There is a connection between the food you eat and your body's estrogen levels. The more estrogen-based foods you consume, the more likely your uterine lining becomes abnormally thick. As a result, when the lining begins to break down during the menstrual cycle, this process creates more prostaglandins, resulting in higher levels of cramp discomfort.

Foods that can contribute to higher estrogen levels and menstrual cramps include animal products, fried foods, fatty foods, and processed foods. By avoiding animal products, processed foods, and added oils, estrogen production is reduced.

A low-fat, high-fiber diet can significantly reduce estrogen levels. A lower hormone level will have less effect on the uterine cells. Foods with grains, beans, and vegetables help increase the elimination of estrogen.

Progesterone

Progesterone's main functions are to prepare the uterine lining for a potential pregnancy and maintain a supportive environment for a fertilized egg. Progesterone also has a relaxing effect on the uterine muscles, which counters the contractions and cramps associated with prostaglandins.

So, boosting the body's natural progesterone production may help you experience less painful periods. Some nutrients that may help boost progesterone levels include zinc, vitamin B, magnesium, vitamin C, and vitamin E. Other ways to increase progesterone are getting enough sleep, reducing stress and exercising.

Constipation

As if cramps aren't enough, many of us also experience constipation during our period. This annoyance can cause us to feel uncomfortable, sluggish and bloated all day long, making our period days even more uncomfortable.

We're not entirely sure what causes constipation during this time of the month, but it's likely caused by the buildup of progesterone as you move toward your period, which slows down the digestive process. The rise of estrogen may also contribute to constipation.

Luckily, constipation is easy to deal with and can be relieved by increasing fiber and healthy foods to your diet. Fiber helps with constipation by adding bulk to the stool, making it softer and easier to pass through the intestines. Also, some foods may help regulate the hormones.

You'll learn more about high-fiber, whole foods that relieve constipation in Part Two.

Diarrhea

Some women experience diarrhea during their periods, and though an annoyance, it's normal. Diarrhea during menstruation is due to a surge in prostaglandins. When released during menstruation, prostaglandins trigger uterine contractions and can also stimulate contractions in the intestines, leading to looser stools and more frequent bowel movements. Essentially, the same mechanism that causes menstrual cramps also affects the bowels.

Good news, a healthy eating routine with vegetables, fruits and grains and without sugar can help reduce diarrhea. You'll learn more in Part Two of this book.

Childhood Obesity

Today in the Western world, especially the United States, childhood obesity is on the rise. In 2024, about 1 in 5 children and adolescents in the United States have obesity. Obesity rates have more than tripled since the mid-1970s

Obesity can lead to menstrual cramps in girls by disrupting hormonal balance, primarily through increased estrogen production from fat cells, which can cause irregular shedding of the uterine lining, leading to heavier periods and potentially more severe cramps. Obesity is also associated with chronic inflammation, which can further exacerbate menstrual discomfort.

The causes of childhood obesity include:

- Poor eating habits with low-nutrient, processed foods and not enough fruits and vegetables
- Not enough physical activity, and engaging in sedentary activities like watching TV
- Excess stress
- Genetics

Childhood obesity leads to cardiovascular problems, and endocrine disorders, such as diabetes, thyroid problems, and adrenal conditions. It has a detrimental effect on mental health and leads to depression and eating disorders.

Childhood obesity has been associated with the earlier onset of puberty and menarche. Even worse, obesity can lead to menstrual irregularities, and can increase the risk of premenstrual disorders, dysmenorrhea (severe pain), and heavy menstrual bleeding in adolescent girls and young adult women.

Eating a daily diet loaded with healthy foods and fewer processed foods helps children shed pounds and maintain a healthy weight, live healthier lives and experience easier periods every month.

Fast Foods

You've probably heard that fast food isn't good for you. For women, fast food is positively detrimental to physical and mental health. They're high in calories, saturated fat, salt, and sugar, and low in beneficial fiber and nutrients. None of this is good for period support.

Low-level nutrients, high calories and saturated fats can diminish your body's general functions and cause unhealthy weight gain. Low fiber can cause constipation and bloating.

And for period health, fast food can wreak havoc due to excessive sodium and sugar levels. Consuming too much salt can lead to water retention, causing bloating and discomfort and worsen the discomfort of cramps. Too much sugar can worsen menstrual cramps because it causes blood sugar spikes and crashes, leading to acute inflammation in the body, which can worsen cramping pain. Sugar also contributes to chronic inflammation that causes long-term harm to your physical and mental health. But even worse, sugar can contribute to bloating and mood swings, both common PMS symptoms.

Now that you understand your period discomfort a bit more, you may be motivated to use food as medicine to welcome period relief. Read on for foods and recipes that help.



Part Two

PERIOD-FRIENDLY FOOD LISTS

PERIOD FRIENDLY FOODS

Let's go back to Hippocrates' statement, "Let your food be your medicine." Certain foods contain nutrients that energize and optimize your body's functions. They help bring the body into balance so that it operates smoothly and efficiently. Adopting eating habits that include whole, healthy foods and fewer junk foods can help boost your body's operating systems and help reduce period discomfort.

In this section, we provide lists of food that are most beneficial in reducing period discomfort. We also provide the beneficial elements of each food, so you can begin to understand the value and, often the necessity, of that food in your daily eating habits. But before we head to the lists, let's learn about whole foods.

Whole foods vs processed foods

When it comes to healthy eating, you may hear the term "whole food," but what does that mean?

Whole foods are foods that are available in their natural state, without having been cooked, canned, frozen, or touched in any way. They are in (or very close to) their original "whole" form. Produce, meats, beans, that you find in the grocery store is an example of a whole food. These foods maintain their nutrients.

Processed foods were invented as a convenience and are pre-packaged, pre-made, and pre-cooked in a factory. Often, they include natural or chemical additives, such as artificial color, artificial flavor, flavor enhancers, thickeners, sweeteners, and hydrogenated oils. They often also contain preservatives for a long shelf life. Processed foods are available in cans, boxes, and can be frozen or precooked.

Through processing, foods are stripped of their nutrients. Junk foods get their name because they are high in calories and low in nutrition. They have no value to the body.

WHOLE FOODS	PROCESSED FOODS
• Fruits • Vegetables • Nuts and seeds • Beans and lentils • Whole grains • Unprocessed meat • Fish and shellfish • Milk • Whole grain bread (if made with whole grains and no chemicals or additives)	• Canned fruits and vegetables • Ham, bacon, and deli meat • Soft drinks • Potato chips, corn chips and pretzels • Bakery products like muffins, cakes and cookies • Ice cream and frozen desserts • Fast foods like French fries and burgers • White bread and rolls

Fiber

One element of fruits, vegetables, beans, seeds and nuts that make them so beneficial for the body is fiber. Fiber is parts of the foods that the body can't digest or absorb. During digestion, nutrients from the foods are absorbed, but fiber passes through the stomach, intestines and colon somewhat intact. This helps waste move through your body smoothly, meaning it can reduce constipation.

Fiber is beneficial for menstrual cramps in several ways:

- A high-fiber diet allows the body to eliminate excess estrogen, which minimizes its impact on the uterus and reduces the potential for painful contractions.
- Fiber improves digestion by promoting regular bowel movements, which can help alleviate bloating and discomfort often associated with menstruation.
- Fiber also helps reduce inflammation, potentially easing menstrual cramps.

There are two main types of fiber, and your body needs both:

- **Soluble fiber.** This type of fiber dissolves in water. It forms a gel-like material in the stomach that slows down digestion. Soluble fiber is found in oats, peas, beans, apples, bananas, avocados, citrus fruits, and carrots.
- **Insoluble fiber.** This type of fiber doesn't dissolve in water. It helps move food through the digestive system and adds bulk to stool. Good sources of insoluble fiber include nuts, beans, and vegetables such as cauliflower, green beans and potatoes.

Most plant foods contain both soluble and insoluble fiber. The amount of each type of fiber varies according to whether it's a fruit, vegetable or whole grain. But it's easy to get both types of fiber by eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruits and veggies.

Period-Friendly Food Lists

All whole, nutritious foods are good for you. Don't limit the healthy foods in your refrigerator and cabinets. These lists provided in this book suggests foods found to be most supportive of menstrual health and helpful in reducing menstrual discomfort. Once you begin to read about the elements of each food that supports menstrual health, you'll want to incorporate them in your eating routine every day.

These lists can be helpful references for your food shopping. And don't be afraid to try new things. Think of these foods as medicine for your body, especially during your period.

Eating these period-friendly foods all month long helps you feel good every day of the month and can help you glide through your periods.



FRUIT

FRUITS add sweetness to life. We may think of fruit as a special treat, but fruits are an important part of a healthy eating regimen. According to a 30-year study by Harvard University, a combination of two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables a day are linked to good health. So be mindful when shopping to pick up some fruit. Today fruits are easily accessible, and even convenience stores sell apples and bananas. Eat fruits as stand-alone snacks and add them to breakfast foods and smoothies.

The foods on this list contain the nutrients that support period comfort, but don't limit yourself to these only. Every fruit offers nutritional benefits.

Apples	The old saying goes, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away." And it's true because apples are good for you every day of the month. And they're especially good during your period. Apples may help reduce menstrual cramps because they are high in fiber and iron and contain nutrients that may fight inflammation. Fiber: Helps with digestion and regulates bowel movements, which can reduce bloating and cramps Iron: Replenishes iron levels during menstruation Antioxidants: Boost overall health and provide sustained energy Malic acid: May aid digestion and enhance liver function
Bananas	Bananas can be helpful in reducing menstrual cramps due to: High content of magnesium: Helps muscles relax and also helps reduce the production of prostaglandins, which are chemicals that cause pain. Potassium: Potassium can help with menstrual cramps because it helps with fluid balance and muscle contractions. Fluid balance Potassium helps maintain fluid balance, which can reduce bloating that can make cramps worse. Muscle contractions Potassium helps muscles contract properly by facilitating communication between muscles and nerves. When potassium levels are low, muscles can get stuck in a contracted position, which can cause cramps.

Berries: • Blueberries • Raspberries • Strawberries	Berries of all kinds are considered a good food to eat during your period to help manage cramps. Antioxidant power: Berries contain high levels of antioxidants that can fight oxidative stress, which is linked to inflammation in the body, including during menstruation. Vitamin C: is known for its anti-inflammatory properties. Fiber content: can help regulate digestion and reduce bloating, which can contribute to menstrual discomfort.
Citrus Fruits • Oranges • Tangerines • Grapefruit • Lemon	Citrus fruits are loaded with Vitamin C, which can be helpful in reducing menstrual cramps. Vitamin C: • Reduces inflammation that causes cramps • Supports healthy blood vessels which improves blood flow for reduced menstrual pain • May help reduce PMS symptoms like anxiety, stress, and depression. • Increases iron absorption, so less is lost during menstruation. Citrus fruits also: • Combat nausea and fatigue • Contain fiber that helps relieve bloating • Are high in water content, which helps you stay hydrated
Dates	A date is a sweet, chewy stone fruit that comes from the date palm tree. Dates are native to the Middle East and are high in fiber and antioxidants. The two most popular dates we consume are medjool and Deglet Noor. Medjool dates are larger, softer, and sweeter than Deglet Noor dates, which are smaller, firmer, and less sweet. Dates are sweet and can be used to replace sugar; they're healthier than sugar, which has no nutritional value. Magnesium content: Dates are a rich source of magnesium, a mineral that plays a crucial role in muscle relaxation, potentially reducing the severity of cramps. Fiber content: can help regulate digestion and alleviate bloating, which can sometimes accompany menstruation. Antioxidants: Helps protect cells and organs from oxidative stress. Potassium: Dates are high in potassium, an electrolyte that helps with heart health and muscle-building. Iron: The iron content of dates will help prevent anemia, which can exacerbate fatigue and weakness during menstruation.

Papaya	A potent anti-inflammatory agent, papaya is very helpful in treating menstrual cramps. Enzymes: Papaya includes enzymes, such as papain, which help digestion by breaking down proteins. While this may not directly affect menstrual health, it may aid women with intestinal pain during their periods. Other nutrients: carotene, iron, calcium, and vitamins A and C that help soothe the uterine walls and ease muscle contractions. Just before and during your period, include papaya in your diet to minimize or eliminate pain.
Pineapple	Pineapple is filled with bromelain enzymes and is one of the best foods to regulate your periods. Bromelain • Helps shed the uterine lining, which can help with irregular periods • Reduces cramps by helping relax the muscles of the uterine wall • Improves blood flow and red and white blood cell production • Reduces bloating by supporting gut health Pineapple also has anti-diarrheal properties, and helpful if diarrhea occurs during menstruation.
Watermelon	Watermelon can be considered good for soothing period cramps because it is primarily composed of water, which helps with hydration and can alleviate cramping by replenishing fluids in the body. Vitamin C: Watermelon is also loaded with Vitamin C, which helps menstruation by: • Help with menstrual pain by reducing inflammation and maintaining healthy blood vessels • Help with premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms like anxiety, stress, and depression. • Increases iron absorption, important since so much iron is lost during menstruation. Watermelon also contains these cramp-reducing properties: Potassium: helps with fluid balance and muscle contractions. Magnesium: Helps relax uterine muscles and lower prostaglandin production Lycopene: is a carotenoid pigment found in red and orange fruits and vegetables, particularly tomatoes. It has numerous health benefits, including antioxidant properties, reducing inflammation, and improving pain relief.



VEGETABLES are vital. A minimum of three servings of vegetables a day are linked to good health. Often, children seem to turn their noses up at vegetables, but as adults who care for our bodies, we must embrace our vegetables.

All vegetables provide nutritional value, so fill your refrigerator with the ones you love. This list features the vegetables with the nutrients that we've found to be most supportive of menstrual comfort.

Avocado	Avocados are creamy in consistency, and buttery in flavor. They're an excellent addition to salads, sandwiches and masked into guacamole. Avocado can help with period cramps because they contain magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids, and other nutrients. Magnesium: Helps relax uterine muscles and lower prostaglandin production Omega-3 fatty acids: Lowers inflammation and prevents excess prostaglandin production Antioxidants: Reduce inflammation and may help lessen period cramps Vitamin B6: Vitamin B6 plays a role in regulating neurotransmitters like serotonin, which can impact mood and pain perception. It may also reduce cramp discomfort. You can eat avocados in many ways, such as: blended in a smoothie, spread on toast, sliced on top of sandwiches, added to a green salad. and mashed into guacamole. Guacamole is not a good vegetable to cook.
Carrots	Carrots and carrot juice may help with menstrual cramps because they contain vitamin E, magnesium, and potassium. Vitamin E: May help reduce pain and excessive menstrual bleeding by balancing hormones Magnesium: May help relax muscles and relieve cramping Potassium: May help alleviate painful cramps and contractions Beta carotene: acts as an antioxidant, which can help combat inflammation in the body, potentially easing menstrual cramps. Some studies suggest that beta-carotene may help block the production of prostaglandins, hormones that contribute to uterine contractions and pain during menstruation.

Broccoli	Broccoli is considered helpful for menstrual cramps because it contains high amounts of fiber and iron, which can help alleviate pain by regulating hormone levels and replenishing blood lost during menstruation. Fiber content: The fiber in broccoli helps with estrogen clearance by binding to excess estrogen in the body, potentially reducing symptoms like bloating and cramps associated with fluctuating hormone levels. High in nutrients: Broccoli contains vitamin C, vitamin K, and potassium. Iron source: The iron in broccoli is crucial to replenish iron stores depleted during menstruation. Antioxidant properties: Can help manage inflammation, a contributing factor to menstrual pain.
Brussels sprouts	Let Brussel sprouts be your friend during your period. The nutrients found in these tiny cabbage-like veggies will help you glide through your period. Indole-3-carbinol (found in cruciferous vegetables): helps to enhance the metabolism and breakdown of estrogen. Excess estrogen in the body may often lead to increased PMS symptoms. High Fiber: Helps detox the body of excess estrogen, which can potentially lessening cramping severity. Nutrient rich: Brussel sprouts contain fiber, iron, calcium, and magnesium Antioxidant properties: Help reduce inflammation associated with menstrual cramps.
Leafy Greens • Spinach • Kale • Arugula • Chard	Leafy greens vegetables, especially the heartier ones listed (versus lettuce, which has less nutritional value), offer a bounty of body-loving nutrition. Iron: iron helps your red blood cells to bring oxygen to your muscles, which can reduce cramping. When your iron levels are low, you're more likely to have cramps. Your blood is rich in iron and losing it during your period can lead to iron deficiency. Leafy greens can maintain iron levels in your blood. Antioxidants: Help to reduce inflammation which leads to uterine cramping. Fiber: Helps with digestion and regulates bowel movements, which can reduce bloating and cramps Rich in calcium and magnesium: Having a calcium deficiency can increase muscle spasms and contractions.
Peas	This small veggie is packed with nutrition and fiber that supports overall health, especially during your period. Nutrient-Rich: Peas contain essential nutrients, including vitamins (A, C, K, B6), minerals (magnesium, potassium, iron), that contribute to optimal health all month long.

	Fiber: Helps with digestion and regulates bowel movements, which can reduce bloating and cramps Anti-inflammatory properties: The fiber in peas may also have anti-inflammatory effects, further aiding in pain relief. Protein: Peas are a good source of plant-based protein
Sweet Potatoes	Sweet potatoes are a delicious tuber vegetable that is nutritious, high in fiber, very filling, and delicious. They can be eaten boiled, baked, steamed, or fried. How sweet potatoes may help Fiber: Fiber can help with digestion and relieve pain from digestive issues that can occur during menstruation. Potassium, calcium, and magnesium: These nutrients can help with menstrual cramps. Antioxidants: These can help prevent inflammation that can occur when muscles are fatigued or exercised. Complex carbohydrates: These can help curb sugar cravings and control mood swings. Beta carotene: acts as an antioxidant, which can help combat inflammation in the body, potentially easing menstrual cramps.
Tomatoes	Tomatoes are packed with anti-inflammatory properties and essential nutrients that can help ease cramps and help with bloating. How tomatoes help with period cramps Potassium: Helps balance fluids in the body and prevent muscle cramps Vitamin C: Boosts the immune system and reduces inflammation Lycopene: Lycopene is a carotenoid pigment found in red and orange fruits and vegetables, particularly tomatoes. It has numerous health benefits, including antioxidant properties, reducing inflammation, and improving pain relief.



BEANS are abundantly beneficial. The typical American too often dismisses the humble bean in favor of meat. But beans can be a healthier choice, especially during menstruation.

Beans provide iron, which our bodies need during the time of the month that we lose blood. Iron deficiency and anemia are linked to cramps and fatigue.

Beans provide protein and essential amino acids, but not all the essential amino acids beef supplies. But when beans are combined with grains, nuts or seeds, they do provide all the essential amino acids the body needs.

Beans are high in fiber, which supports digestion. Meat slows down digestion.

Beware: Beans can cause digestive gas. if you're not use to eating beans, introduce them slowly into your eating routine and experiment with various beans to see what works best for you. Soaking dried beans before cooking can help reduce gas-producing properties. Learn how to cook beans ahead in the recipe section.

Black beans	Black beans are high in protein, fiber, and iron, which may help with period cramps and other menstrual symptoms. However, some people say that beans can upset their stomach during their period. Benefits Protein: Helps curb cravings for less healthy options Fiber: May help relieve pain from digestive symptoms that occur during menstruation Iron: Helps replenish iron stores and prevent iron deficiency anemia Magnesium: May ease the pain of cramps
Edamame beans	Edamame is considered beneficial for menstrual cramps because it is a rich source of phytoestrogens, plant compounds that mimic estrogen and can help regulate hormone levels. This can help reduce the severity of cramps resulting from fluctuating estrogen during the menstrual cycle. Edamame contains omega-3 fatty acids which have anti-inflammatory properties that can also alleviate menstrual pain.

	Phytoestrogens: The main reason edamame is considered helpful is due to its content of phytoestrogens, which can help balance hormone levels and potentially lessen the intensity of cramps. Omega-3 fatty acids: Known for their anti-inflammatory effects that can contribute to reducing menstrual pain. Potential for PMS relief: Studies have shown that consuming soy products like edamame may help alleviate PMS symptoms like breast tenderness and headaches alongside cramps.
Lentils Varieties include: • Black • Brown • Green • Red	Lentils have been a staple in India for centuries and have more recently become popular in kitchens in the West because they are affordable, nutritious, and versatile. They are also a plant-based protein that can fit into many diets and cuisines. They're tasty as soups, in salads, and as main courses combined with grain. Iron: Lentils are rich in iron, which helps replenish the iron lost during menstruation, reducing fatigue and supporting energy levels. Protein Lentils are an excellent source of plant-based protein Fiber: Their fiber content aids in maintaining regular bowel movements, addressing common digestive issues often associated with menstruation.
Red Beans	Red beans also known as adzuki beans, offer several benefits for menstrual health. (Red beans are different than kidney beans, and contain more nutrients than kidney beans.) Iron: These legumes are rich in iron, a crucial mineral that helps replenish the blood lost during menstruation, preventing anemia and fatigue. Magnesium: Red beans contain magnesium, which may alleviate menstrual cramps and promote muscle relaxation. Fiber: Their fiber content aids in maintaining regular bowel movements, addressing common digestive issues often associated with menstruation. Other Nutrients: The presences of zinc and vitamin B6 further contributes to overall well-being during the menstrual cycle.
Pinto Beans	Fiber content: The high fiber in pinto beans can help balance hormone levels, particularly estrogen, which can contribute to reducing cramping severity. Anti-inflammatory properties: Fiber can also decrease inflammation in the body, which is often associated with menstrual pain. Iron source: Pinto beans are a good source of iron, which can be important during menstruation due to blood loss. Magnesium content: Magnesium is another mineral that can help with muscle relaxation, potentially easing cramps.

	Protein source: The protein in pinto beans can help you feel fuller and manage cravings during your period.
Garbanzo Beans aka Chickpeas	Chickpeas are rich in vitamin C, zin and vitamin B6 and promote a healthy hormone balance. Lowered inflammation: Due to vitamins A, C, and B6; fiber; protein; magnesium; selenium; and iron. Iron: Chickpeas are a good plant-based source of iron, providing about 1.5 mg of iron per cup (164 grams). Iron is an essential mineral that helps in the production of red blood cells and oxygen transport in the body. High in fiber: Chickpeas are high in dietary fiber



GRAINS are great for health. When we think of grain, wheat likely pops into mind. Whole wheat, which is the wheat berry with the hull still intact, has nutritional benefits. But other grains reign supreme when it comes to nutrition for menstrual comfort.

The grains on this list are must-haves for your nutritional lifestyle. They support feminine health, and when eaten with vegetables and beans, they provide delicious, satisfying, nutritionally-robust and period-friendly meals.

Quinoa	Quinoa is an ancient grain originating from South America. IT's considered a "superfood" because it's packed with nutrients, fiber, protein, and plant compounds. It's also gluten-free and good for those with gluten intolerance. It has many health benefits and is an easy way to add variety to your diet. Magnesium: Quinoa's magnesium content can help with muscle cramps. Protein: Quinoa contains complete proteins, which can help with food cravings and reduce fatigue and potentially reduce inflammation. Vitamin B6: Vitamin B6 plays a role in regulating neurotransmitters like serotonin, which can impact mood and pain perception. It may also reduce cramp discomfort. Zinc: By acting as an anti-inflammatory and antioxidant within the uterus, cramping is reduced. Fiber: Quinoa's fiber content can help with bloating. Digestion: Quinoa's fiber content can improve digestion and help reduce bloating. Iron: Quinoa's iron content can help compensate for iron deficiencies that can occur with blood loss during menstruation.
Millet	Millets are a group a small, round whole grains grown in India, Nigeria, and other Asian and African countries. Considered an ancient grain, millet looks like a seed and is rich in nutrients that can help with hormonal balance and easing discomfort during menstruation. Millet is gluten free, too. Nutrients: Millets are rich in nutrients like magnesium, potassium, iron, zinc, and vitamins.

	Hormonal balance: Millets contain phytoestrogens that may help maintain hormonal balance in women. B Vitamins: B vitamins that may help regulate hormone production and ovulation. Fiber: Millets are high in fiber, which may help digest sugar and reduce insulin spikes. Antioxidants: Millets contain antioxidants that may help combat oxidative stress, which can disrupt hormonal pathways. Low glycemic index: Millets have a low glycemic index, which means they release sugar slowly into the bloodstream.
Brown rice	Rice is the most familiar of grains, and we've eaten it most of our lives. Nearly half of the people in the world get approximately 50% of their calories from rice. White and brown rice are the same, however brown rice has its outer hull. This hull makes brown rice more beneficial for the body than white rice. Brown rice can help with menstrual cramps because it contains magnesium and fiber. Magnesium helps relax muscles, and fiber can reduce bloating. Brown rice is gluten-free, too. Magnesium: Brown rice contains more magnesium than white rice. Magnesium helps relax muscles by blocking signals that cause them to contract. Fiber: Brown rice is a whole grain, which is high in fiber. Fiber helps with digestion and can reduce bloating. Vitamin B6: Brown rice also contains vitamin B6, which may reduce bloating.
Oats	Oatmeal is a long-time favorite breakfast food that is filled with fiber and nutrition that can help with menstrual cramps. Note: Oatmeal contains gluten, which can be problematic for those with gluten intolerance. Oatmeal is high in fiber, magnesium, and zinc. These nutrients can help relax blood vessels, reduce inflammation, and regulate serotonin levels. Fiber: Helps you feel full longer and improves digestion Magnesium: Relaxes muscles and helps regulate serotonin Zinc: A natural anti-inflammatory agent



NUTS & SEEDS

NUTS and SEEDS make tasty and satisfying snacks and accents to recipes. And they're packed with **Omega 3 fatty acids**, which have anti-inflammatory properties that can help alleviate pain associated with period cramps. Individual varieties of nuts and seeds also offer their own unique properties that also contribute to menstrual support.

Nuts and seeds are also a good source of fiber, which can help regulate digestion and reduce bloating, which can contribute to cramping.

Raw and unsalted nuts and seeds are best, as they contain most of their nutrients. They can be eaten by the handful as a snack or mixed in with salads and grains and used in baked goods. They're delicious and crunch in breakfast grains, like oatmeal. Seeds can be used in smoothies, added to grains, and mixed into baked goods. Nut and seed butter can be spread on wholegrain bread, apples, dates, and celery.

All nuts and seeds contain vitamins and minerals that contribute to your health, and the ones listed below rise to the top as the most beneficial for reducing menstrual discomfort.

Almonds	Magnesium: a muscle relaxant that can help reduce uterine contractions and cramping. Vitamin E: may help protect cells from damage and reduce inflammation. Manganese: involved in the production of endorphins, which are natural painkillers.
Walnuts	Magnesium May help reduce muscle contractions that cause cramping. Magnesium also helps regulate the nervous system and decrease levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Omega-3 fatty acids May reduce inflammation and swelling. Other foods that contain omega-3 fatty acids include chia seeds, flaxseeds, salmon, herring, sardines, mackerel, oysters, and edamame beans.
Flax seeds	Flaxseeds can be a powerful addition to your period pain relief. Not only can they help reduce cramps, but they may also help regulate your cycle, boost your chances of ovulation and balance your estrogen levels. Lignans These phytoestrogens, which are estrogen-like compounds derived from

	plants, can help balance estrogen levels. This helps in potentially alleviating symptoms related to hormonal fluctuations during the menstrual cycle. Fiber The high fiber in flaxseeds aids digestion and helps regulate insulin levels. This also contributes to hormonal balance and reduced menstrual symptoms. Omega-3 Flaxseeds are rich in omega-3s, which have anti-inflammatory effects that can help reduce menstrual cramps and discomfort associated with dysmenorrhea. How to use: Flaxseeds are available whole or ground into a meal. Add to your cooked cereal, baked good recipes, steep as a tea.
Sesame Seeds	This small but mighty seed is native to African and India, and is also grown in China, Japan and the United States. There are many kinds of sesame seeds, and the most popular is the white seed. Sesame seeds' dense nutrition supports menstrual health. Calcium: Surprisingly, sesame seeds contain more calcium per gram than dairy products, making them an excellent source of this bone-strengthening mineral. Iron: One tablespoon of sesame seeds contains approximately 1.3 milligrams of iron, which can help replace what is lost during menstruation. Zinc: essential for immune function and wound healing. B vitamins: A rich source of B vitamins, including folate, thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin. These nutrients support energy, DNA function and brain health. Lignans: These phytoestrogens, which are estrogen-like compounds derived from plants, can help balance estrogen levels. This helps in potentially alleviating symptoms related to hormonal fluctuations during the menstrual cycle. Digestive Health: The fiber in sesame seeds aids digestion and helps maintain a healthy gut microbiome. Anti-Inflammatory Properties: Compounds like sesamin and sesamol in sesame seeds give them potent anti-inflammatory properties, which can ease menstrual discomfort due to inflammation in the body. How to use: Sprinkle sesame seeds onto salads and main dishes, mix in smoothies, and add to your baking recipes. Tahini / Sesame Seed Butter Tahini is sesame seed butter or paste. It has a consistency similar to peanut butter, and the flavor is a little less sweet with a slight bitterness. But it's delicious and so much better for you than peanut butter. Use tahini as a spread, in baking and other recipes.

Pumpkin seeds, aka Pepita	Pumpkin seeds are the edible seeds of pumpkins or other squash. They are loaded with nutritional benefits. Phytoestrogens: Phytoestrogens can potentially help alleviate menstrual cramps by mimicking the body's natural estrogen, helping to stabilize hormone fluctuations during the menstrual cycle, which can lead to reduced pain associated with cramps; Zinc: Pumpkin seeds are a good source of zinc, which is essential for immune function and wound healing Lignans These phytoestrogens, which are estrogen-like compounds derived from plants, can help balance estrogen levels. This helps in potentially alleviating symptoms related to hormonal fluctuations during the menstrual cycle. Omega-3 Flaxseeds are rich in omega-3s, which have anti-inflammatory effects that can help reduce menstrual cramps and discomfort associated with dysmenorrhea.
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SEAFOOD is robust in **Omega-3 fatty acids**, are considered beneficial for menstrual cramps and the reduction of uterine contractions. And it's more economical than you think, with inexpensive tuna and sardines as options.

Seafoods: • Sardines • Tuna • Wild Atlantic salmon • Wild Atlantic herring • Trout • Mackerel	Seafood is robust in Omega-3 fatty acids, are considered beneficial for menstrual cramps and the reduction of uterine contractions. They contain potent anti-inflammatory properties by potentially influencing the production of prostaglandins, the chemicals responsible for menstrual cramp. Omega-3 fatty acids are a group of polyunsaturated fats that are essential for human health. Among several other benefits to overall health, Omega 3s have anti-inflammatory properties. They can influence the production of prostaglandins, chemicals involved in uterine contractions, potentially reducing their intensity and leading to less pain. Protein: Fish is also a great source of protein, which is important for building muscle and other essential body functions. A study found that a lack of animal protein in the diet experienced more severe menstrual pain Anti-inflammatory: Fish contains potent anti-inflammatory properties by potentially influencing the production of prostaglandins, the chemicals responsible for menstrual cramp.
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MEAT provides essential amino acids that most foods don't have on their own (though food combination, such as beans and grains, do provide essential amino acids.) Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins, and are important for growth, repair, and maintenance of tissues, organs, and systems throughout the body.

When the body is deficient in amino acids, symptoms can such as fatigue, muscle pain, mood swings, and sleep disorders can appear.

Animal meat does provide essential amino acids. Red meat provides iron and B vitamins, but the downside is that red meat is also high in prostaglandins, naturally occurring compounds that trigger uterine contractions, which can lead to increased cramping.

Chicken and turkey meat provide essential amino acids, and is lower in saturated fat and low in in prostaglandins, making it a good choice for reducing inflammation and cramping.

Poultry: • Chicken • Turkey	Essential amino acids: Iron content: Chicken is a good source of iron, a mineral often depleted during menstruation, which can contribute to fatigue and muscle cramps if not replenished. Protein source: The protein in chicken can help stabilize blood sugar levels and provide sustained energy throughout the menstrual cycle, potentially reducing the intensity of cramps. Lean protein: Unlike fatty meats, lean chicken is considered a healthier option, as excessive saturated fat can contribute to inflammation and worsen cramps.
Eggs	Eggs may help with menstrual pain and PMS symptoms due to their nutrients, but more research is needed. Why eggs may help: Calcium and magnesium: May help reduce menstrual cramps and pain Vitamin B6: May help reduce inflammation Vitamin D: May help relieve muscle pain and reduce inflammation in the uterus Protein: May help you feel full longer.



HERBS and SPICES have been used as medicines for the body since ancient times. The phytochemicals and other compounds of these miracle foods are so effective, herbs and spices are still used for healing purposes today.

Herbs are the leaves, flowers, or other aromatic parts of a plant that are used to flavor food, make medicine, or create fragrances.

Spices are made from the aromatic seeds, bark, flowers, and roots of plants that have been dried and crushed.

Some herbs and spices have been used to support women's menstrual health for millennia. Following are a few spices and herbs that have been found especially helpful in reducing cramps, bloating, nausea and fatigue.

Caution: Herbs are powerful and can have an effect on medications. Be sure to consult with your doctor to be sure herbs are right for you and your medications.

Cinnamon	Cinnamon is a spice that comes from the inner bark of trees in the Cinnamomum genus. We often think of cinnamon as a baking spice. But it's so much more. A study with cinnamon found a reduction of pain, menstrual bleeding, nausea and vomiting with primary dysmenorrhea without side effects. Cinnamon can be regarded as a safe and effective treatment for dysmenorrhea in young women. Some evidence suggests that cinnamon may help reduce inflammation, which may reduce the uncomfortable bloating that often accompanies your menstrual cycle In traditional Chinese medicine, cinnamon is considered a warming herb, which can be helpful for relieving menstrual discomfort associated with "cold" symptoms. How to use: Use cinnamon to add flavor and spice to your cereals and baked goods Drink as a tea, by adding cinnamon powder to hot water. It can also be taken in capsule form as a nutritional supplement.
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Dong quai	Dong quai is a member of the same plant family as parsley, celery, and carrots. It is the dried root of <i>Angelica sinensis</i>, which is commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine to promote blood circulation and treat menstrual disorders such as cramps, as well as other women's health issues. In Chinese medicine, Dong quai is sometimes referred to as the "the female ginseng." Z-ligustilide: a bioactive component of dong quai that studies show improves microcirculation, suggesting it might antispasmodic effects. Ligustilide also has anti-inflammatory effects, which could contribute to the mechanisms of relief of menstrual symptoms. How to use: Dong quai is available in tea form, and can be taken in capsule form as a nutritional supplement. Warning: Dong quai taken in high levels can be unsafe.
Ginger	Ginger is native to tropical and subtropical forests of Southeast Asia. Ginger is not a root, but rather a rhizome, which is a type of underground stem. The flavor is sharp, warm and spicy. Ginger contains several biological activities that help reduce menstrual discomfort, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and antinausea activities. Because it has anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties, it may help with both pain and bloating. Anti-inflammatory properties: Ginger's anti-inflammatory compounds are believed to help alleviate muscle pain and discomfort during menstruation. Antinausea: Ginger is believed to work by stimulating gastric emptying and reducing stomach contractions, which can help to alleviate nausea. It may also have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that contribute to its anti-nausea effects. How to use: Ginger is available raw in grocery stores and found in the produce department. Add to cooked foods for flavor and nutrition. Drink as a tea. Ginger is also available as powder and in capsule form as a nutritional supplement. .
Chamomile	You may have had chamomile tea to help you relax before going to bed. And while it doesn't appear to have a direct effect on menstrual cramps, its contribution to sleep can reduce fatigue and period discomfort. Poor quality sleep is associated with more severe menstrual problems. A study also found that consuming chamomile starting a week before menstruation may reduce menstrual bleeding. How to use: Drink as a tea or take chamomile supplements.

Peppermint	For centuries, mint plants have been used for topical pain relief and food flavoring. Peppermint leaves, particularly in the form of peppermint tea, can potentially help alleviate menstrual cramps due to the muscle-relaxing properties of menthol. Menthol: Peppermint contains menthol, an organic compound that occurs naturally in peppermint and other mints. Menthol is an active component that is thought to have an analgesic effect. A study found peppermint extract in capsule form was as effective as mefenamic acid (found in prescription anti-inflammatory medication) in reducing menstrual pain intensity and duration. Menthol produces a cooling sensation when inhaled, eaten, or applied to the skin. When consumed as a tea, menthol acts as a muscle relaxant, easing uterine contractions that cause cramps. How to use: Fresh peppermint can be added to smoothies. Drink peppermint tea, take peppermint oil capsules, or even apply diluted peppermint oil topically to your abdomen.
Turmeric	Turmeric, the popular yellow spice used in Indian cuisine, has anti-inflammatory properties and may aid in relieving cramps. Studies show that turmeric can boost pain-relieving properties when taken with other medications. We don't yet have research on whether turmeric alone can treat cramps, but studies show that it can provide extra relief when you take it with other medications. Curcumin: the active component in turmeric, is responsible for its anti-inflammatory effects. Curcumin can help reduce the production of prostaglandins, chemicals responsible for uterine contractions causing cramps during menstruation How to use: You can add turmeric to your food as a spice, incorporate it into warm drinks like turmeric tea. Add to your ginger tea when you feel cramps start. Take curcumin supplements.
Fennel	Fennel is both a vegetable and an herb. The bulb can be eaten like a vegetable, the fronds can be used as an herb, and the seeds can be used as a spice. According to research, fennel can be helpful in reducing menstrual cramps. Anethole: This is the active compound in fennel thought to be responsible for its antispasmodic properties. It acts as a muscle relaxer and reduces uterine spasms during menstruation. How to use: Add fresh fennel in soups and other dishes. Drink as a tea by steeping fennel seeds in hot water. Also available as a supplement in the form of capsules or extract.

Thyme	Thyme is considered beneficial for menstrual cramps primarily because of its antispasmodic properties, meaning it can help relax uterine muscles and reduce contractions, the main cause of cramping Thymol: The main component of thyme, thymol, is thought to be responsible for its antispasmodic action, helping to relax uterine muscles and alleviate cramps. Studies: • One study found that drinking thyme tea decreased the risk of primary dysmenorrhea by 63.2% in Ethiopian school girls • Another study found that people who took thyme essential oil had reduced pain similar to those who took ibuprofen How to use: Add thyme to soups. Drink thyme tea. Massage into abdomen by adding a few drops of thyme essential oil diluted in a carrier oil and applying it topically to the abdomen. Consult a healthcare professional before using essential oils.
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VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS

VITAMINS SUPPLEMENTS offer additional nutritional support. We can get the vitamins we need from eating a healthy diet loaded with nutritious foods, but sometimes food alone can't deliver what the body needs, and this can lead to a vitamin deficiency. Nutritional supplements assure our body receives the nutrients it needs.

We've learned that vitamin deficiencies such as iron, Vitamins B and D can lead to increased menstrual discomfort and dysmenorrhea. Supplements are helpful in supporting menstrual health and reducing menstrual cramps and fatigue.

This list below features a few supplements that may help you feel less crampy, bloated and fatigued every day of the month. This is but a small list from the huge array of nutritional supplements that support good health.

Vitamin supplements help a lot of women and are promising to support menstrual health, more research is needed to fully understand and prove their effectiveness.

NOTE: Before starting any new supplements, it is important to consult a healthcare professional to discuss potential interactions with other medications and to determine if the vitamin is right for you.

Also, follow the recommended dosage. Some vitamins can be toxic if taken in high doses over time. These include Vitamins A, D, E and K.

Calcium	Calcium is considered beneficial for menstrual cramps because it helps regulate muscle contractions by acting as a muscle stabilizer, potentially reducing the severity of cramps by minimizing excessive muscle spasms that can occur during menstruation; research suggests that low calcium levels may contribute to increased muscle contractions and pain, making adequate calcium intake important for menstrual health. Key points about calcium and menstrual cramps: Muscle function: Calcium plays a vital role in muscle contraction and relaxation, and maintaining proper calcium levels can help prevent excessive muscle spasms which are often associated with menstrual cramps. Potential for pain reduction: Studies have indicated that adequate calcium intake may reduce the intensity and duration of menstrual pain, particularly when combined with vitamin D, which aids in calcium absorption.
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	Improved blood flow: Increasing calcium intake may improve blood flow to the uterus, and thus reduce cramping. Low calcium levels are found to lead to more painful uterine muscle spasms. PMS link: Some research suggests a connection between low calcium levels and symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), which can include bloating and mood swings, further supporting the potential benefits of calcium supplementation. Foods high in calcium include: sesame seeds, almonds, leafy green vegetables and dairy products. Calcium is also available in supplement form.
Boron	Studies have shown that boron supplementation can effectively alleviate menstrual discomfort. Boron's anti-inflammatory properties can help reduce the severity and duration of menstrual pain by reducing muscle contractions associated with cramps. Anti-inflammatory effect: Boron's primary mechanism for helping with menstrual cramps is its ability to reduce inflammation in the body, which is a key factor contributing to pain during menstruation. Potential for pain reduction: Research has indicated that taking boron supplements can significantly decrease the intensity and duration of menstrual cramps. Hormone regulation: Some studies suggest that boron may also play a role in regulating hormone levels, which could further contribute to menstrual pain relief. Foods with high concentration of boron include: avocados, peanut butter, chickpeas, prunes and bananas
Iron	Iron can help with period pain and fatigue by increasing iron levels that dip during PMS and menstruation. Iron supplements: Can help with iron deficiency and anemia, which can occur due to heavy menstrual bleeding. Iron deficiency is also associated with menstruation-related migraine headaches and moodiness.
Vitamin B1	Vitamin B1 plays a role in nerve function and muscle contraction, which may contribute to its potential pain-relieving effects during menstruation.
Vitamin B6	According to current research, Vitamin B6 may be helpful in reducing menstrual cramps, particularly when associated with premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Further studies are needed to confirm this. Some studies suggest Vitamin B6 can alleviate pain and other PMS symptoms like mood swings and breast tenderness, but not all women experience relief from taking Vitamin B6.

	Mechanism: Vitamin B6 plays a role in regulating neurotransmitters like serotonin, which can impact mood and pain perception. Potential benefits: Several studies indicate that Vitamin B6 supplementation may help reduce the severity of menstrual cramps and other PMS symptoms like bloating and mood swings.
Vitamin D	Studies show that Vitamin D supplementing can significantly decrease the severity of pain associated with menstrual cramps in women with Vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D can also reduce PMS symptoms. Mechanism: Vitamin D may reduce inflammation and pain signals by interacting with receptors in the reproductive system, potentially alleviating menstrual pain. Vitamin D deficiency: Studies suggest a link between low Vitamin D levels and increased severity of menstrual cramps. Studies have shown that an intake of 50,000 IU of vitamin D supplements per week for 8–9 weeks can reduce the severity of cramps.
Vitamin E	Vitamin E is considered beneficial for menstrual cramps because of its antioxidant properties, which can help reduce the production of prostaglandins, chemicals responsible for uterine contractions. Antioxidant effect: Vitamin E acts as an antioxidant, preventing the breakdown of cell membranes which can lead to increased prostaglandin production. Arachidonic acid inhibition: Vitamin E can inhibit the release of arachidonic acid, a precursor to prostaglandins, further reducing their production. Muscle relaxation: By reducing inflammation caused by prostaglandins, vitamin E may also help relax uterine muscles, lessening the intensity of cramps. Studies shown that taking 25,000 IU of vitamin E for 5 days starting 2 days before menstruation can reduce the severity of cramps. A study shows a combination of Omega 3 and vitamin E can help treat PMS. Women who took 2 grams of a combination of Omega #3 (EFAs) and vitamin E had significantly improved PMS symptoms after 3 months of treatments
Magnesium	Magnesium boosts anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects and helps with period cramps by relaxing uterine muscles and reducing prostaglandins, which are chemicals that cause pain. Magnesium may also help with other PMS symptoms, including bloating, breast tenderness and fluid retention. Prostaglandin regulation: Inhibits the metabolism of prostaglandins, which are chemicals that trigger uterine contractions and can contribute to severe menstrual cramps.

	A study found 300mg of magnesium was more effective in decreasing symptoms such as cramps, headache, back pain, foot pain, depression, irritability, and abdominal pain
Potassium	Potassium can help with menstrual cramps because it helps with fluid balance and muscle contractions. Fluid balance: Potassium helps maintain fluid balance, which can reduce bloating that can make cramps worse. Muscle contractions: Potassium helps muscles contract properly by facilitating communication between muscles and nerves. When potassium levels are low, muscles can get stuck in a contracted position, which can cause cramps.
Zinc	Zinc is considered beneficial for menstrual cramps because it can potentially reduce the production of prostaglandins, hormones responsible for uterine contractions that can cause pain. Zinc acts as an anti-inflammatory and antioxidant within the uterus, which helps reduce cramping. Zinc may improve microcirculation in the uterine lining, further reducing pain by enhancing blood flow to the area. Studies have indicated that women experiencing severe menstrual cramps may have lower zinc levels, suggesting that supplementation could be beneficial. Prostaglandin regulation: Inhibits the metabolism of prostaglandins, which are chemicals that trigger uterine contractions and can contribute to severe menstrual cramps. Antioxidant properties: Can help combat oxidative stress in the uterus, which may further reduce inflammation and pain. Improved blood flow: Can improve microcirculation in the uterine lining, potentially preventing pain caused by reduced blood flow.
Fish Oil Omega 3	Sometimes we just can't eat enough fish to satisfy our daily needs for Omega 3, but fish oil can supplement it. Fish oil is derived from fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel, and trout, and shellfish, such as mussels, oysters, and crabs. Fish oil contains two omega-3s called eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Anti-inflammatory: Decreases inflammation throughout the body, including in the uterus, which can alleviate menstrual pain. Lowers prostaglandin levels: Fish oil can significantly lessen the severity of menstrual cramps by lowering the body's production of prostaglandins, chemicals responsible for pain signaling.

	Studies have shown that taking omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid at a daily dosage of 2 g fish oil supplement can improve menstrual pain. It can also reduce PMS symptoms. A study shows a combination of Omega 3 and vitamin E can help treat PMS. Women who took 2 grams of a combination of Omega #3 (EFAs) and vitamin E had significantly improved PMS symptoms after 3 months of treatments
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Here are additional period-friendly foods worth noting:

Coconut water	There is some evidence that coconut water may help alleviate period cramps. Coconut water contains electrolytes, such as magnesium and potassium, which can help reduce muscle spasms and pain. It also contains antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that may help reduce inflammation associated with cramps. A small study found that women who drank coconut water for three days before and during their periods experienced significantly less severe cramps. Another study found that coconut water was effective in reducing pain intensity and duration in women with painful periods. These studies were small and more research is needed to confirm these findings. Additionally, coconut water may not be an effective treatment for all women with period cramps.
Dark chocolate	Chocolate may help relieve period cramps; the best results occur with 70% dark chocolate or more. Milk chocolate has no effect. Magnesium: Dark chocolate may help because it provides a dose magnesium, which has been found to possibly reduce menstrual cramps. Antioxidants: The flavonoids in dark chocolate have anti-inflammatory effects which can help reduce menstrual pain. Because chocolate contains sugar, limit your intake to only a few squares of dark chocolate during your period to get relief from cramps.
Water	Our body is made of 60% water. Water is considered healing to the body because it is essential for many bodily functions, including transporting nutrients, regulating temperature, and removing waste and toxins. Water can help diminish period discomfort. A study shows the results of trial suggest that drinking 1600–2000 ml (approx. 6 to 8 cups) of water daily and regularly can reduce the severity of primary dysmenorrhea and shorten the length of menstrual bleeding. How to use: Drink water regularly through the day every day. When cramping, drink warm water. Add lemon for flavor and added inflammation reduction.



Part Three

FOOD PREP & RECIPES

FOOD PREP

Eating well doesn't have to be complicated, and in fact, the simpler the meal and less the prep the healthier food can be. These recipes we offer range from super-simple to a bit time-consuming, but they're all delicious and feature ingredients that support your body for comfortable and easy periods.

We're true believers that whole foods are truly medicine for the body. Cooking to maintain the most nutrients from the food can be a bit of an art. We're here to help you.

The following are instructions for vegetable steaming, cooking dried beans, and cooking beneficial grains so that maximum nutrients are maintained, while creating flavors and textures that you'll love to eat every day.

FOOD PREP: VEGETABLE STEAMING



Steaming is fast, easy and may become your favorite veggie cooking method. This cooking method cooks veggies to a satisfying tenderness, while maintaining their color and flavor.

As the name suggests, steaming cooks vegetables by way of steam. Prepared vegetables are placed into a metal steaming basket and placed into a pot with about an inch of water at the bottom. When the water boils, it creates steam that cooks the vegetables. Because the vegetables don't make contact with the water, most vitamins are preserved. Boiling vegetables can destroy the nutrients. Steaming also helps retain antioxidants, which have inflammation-fighting properties.

Since steaming typically requires minimal or no added oil, it contributes to a lower calorie meal.

All you need is a medium-sized pot and a steamer basket.

Where to buy steamer baskets

Often you can find inexpensive metal steamer baskets at a grocery store or in the cooking section of a department store. Amazon has a great variety of steamer baskets.

How to use a steamer basket

Steamer baskets can be inserted into a pot that has about an inch of simmering water in the bottom. For best results, the water level should be just below the steamer basket so the food in the bottom of the basket is not sitting or boiling in the water.

The pot should have a well-fitting lid that prevents steam from escaping.

Vegetables should be cut to similar sizes so they cook in the same amount of time.

The Art of Steaming

There is a bit of an art to steaming. It's a fast method of cooking and requires keen attention.

Caution: Steam is extremely hot, so be careful when steaming to avoid burns.

There are two important factors in steaming vegetables so that they maintain the right amount of color and crunch: 1) the density of the vegetable and 2) the time it takes to cook it.

Rule of thumb; the firmer and more compact the vegetable, the longer it will take to steam.

The *approximate* time it takes for veggies to steam (*after the water has started to boil*):

- **Firm vegetables**, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, and beets: sliced or cut into small pieces: 2 – 3 minutes
- **Medium firm vegetables**, like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussel sprouts: cut into small to medium pieces 1 -2 minutes
- **Leafy greens**, such as Kale, spinach and chard: 30 seconds to 1 minute

To steam a variety of vegetables in one pot, start with the firmest veggies first, then add the medium veggies, and finally the leafy veggies. Paying attention to the process is key.

Here's how to steam the best vegetable combo:

1. Prepare your vegetables by cutting them and putting them to the side.
2. Pour about an inch of water into the bottom of a medium-size pot, place the basket in the pot, place lid on the pot.
3. Put the firm vegetables into the pot.
4. Turn the stove burner to high heat. Wait for the water to boil and begin timing the cooking process. (You can estimate or even use the stop watch on your smart phone.)
5. After 1 minute, test the vegetable for its cooking status. Carefully insert a fork into the vegetable to check for state of tenderness. If it is still very hard, put the lid back on and let it continue to steam for another 30 seconds until it is half-cooked.
6. When the vegetable is half-cooked (still somewhat hard), add the medium firm vegetables to the steamer.

7. Allow them to steam for about 1 minute, check for firmness. If they're about half-cooked, add the leafy veggies.
8. Let steam for 30 seconds or until the leafy veggies are cooked to suit you.
9. Turn off the burner and carefully move the veggies from the pot to your plate.

Top with olive oil, lemon juice, garlic powder, and/or sea salt.

Steamed vegetables go great with quinoa, brown rice, and millet. Cook the grains separately in advance of steaming the vegetables.

FOOD PREP: DRY BEAN COOKING

Beans are available pre-cooked in cans. This is not only convenient, but much of the nutritional value is maintained.

Beans are also available dried in bags and must be cooked. Cooking beans from dried beans can be more economical, flavorful, and nutritious than canned beans. For some beans, presoaking overnight will reduce cooking time and will also reduce the potential gas-producing effects they may have on your body.

Pre-soaking is suggested for larger beans, like garbanzo, red, pinto or black beans.

Small beans, like lentils, don't require pre-soaking and cook fairly quickly, around 30 minutes.

Bean Soaking and Cooking Instructions

1. Rinse beans in a colander or strainer.
2. Place them in a pot, cover with water (purified or spring water is best). The ratio is 1 cup of beans and 3 cups of water.
3. Place a lid on the pot, and place overnight in the refrigerator.
4. The next day, cook on low heat between 45 minutes and 2 hours, or until tender.

FOOD PREP: GRAIN COOKING

Grains can be an essential element of a balanced meal, providing beneficial nutrients and eating satisfaction. But some grains take a few minutes to cook, brown rice can take up to 45 minutes to fully cook. When planning a meal, take this into consideration, so that you can eat on time.

To cook rice and quinoa, follow instructions that follow.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of rice or quinoa
- 2 cups of water

Instructions:

- 1) Rinse grain in a colander or sieve
- 2) In a pan, bring water to boil, add grain, stir and cover
- 3) Reduce flame to low, and allow to simmer until grain is cooked and fluffy.
 - Quinoa cook time: approx. 15 minutes
 - Brown rice: approx.. 40 minutes
- 4) Remove from heat and let it sit while still covered.

Cook millet as follows:

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of rice or quinoa
- 3 cups of water

Instructions:

- 1) Rinse grain in a colander or sieve
- 2) In a pan, bring water to boil, add grain, stir and cover
- 3) Reduce flame to low, and allow to simmer until grain is cooked and fluffy, approximately 30 minutes
- 4) Remove from heat and let it sit while still covered.

Cooked grains can be stored in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days.



SOUPS

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, your period is the coldest part of your cycle due to a slight drop in basal body temperature. Also, an increase in progesterone just before you start your period can restrict blood flow, leading to coldness in your extremities. Warm, well-cooked foods, like soups and stews, will help to increase blood flow and circulation. Not only will you feel warmer, but your cramps may also be soothed. And soups are a delicious and nutritious way to nourish your body. These warm foods will soothe your belly and caress your cramps.

FAST AND EASY VEGETABLE BROTH SOUP



Super-Simple

Makes 2 – 3 servings.

We offer these suggested ingredients, but any vegetable in your refrigerator will do.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 cup cabbage, chopped
- ½ onion (optional)
- 2 cups kale or spinach, chopped
- 2 cups chopped broccoli, chopped
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 4 cups canned chicken, beef or miso broth
- 1 tablespoon or olive oil or coconut oil

Instructions:

1. Place olive oil or coconut oil into bottom of medium size sauce pot.
2. Turn up the heat to medium-high.
3. Add carrots, celery, onion, cabbage and broccoli. Stir for about 5 minutes to slightly soften the ingredients and allow the flavors to meld together.
4. Add kale/spinach and peas to the pot. Stir for one minute.
5. Pour the broth into the pot over the veggies.
6. Bring the broth to nearly a boil, then turn to low and simmer for 20 minutes or more.
7. Turn off the heat and serve.

HEALING ASIAN GINGER SOUP

Ingredients

- 4 cups chicken broth (3 cans)
- 4 thick slices fresh ginger root (or more)
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 cup spinach leaves, sliced into thin ribbons
- 1 green onion, very thinly sliced



Instructions

1. In medium saucepan, bring chicken stock to a low simmer. Simmer 15-20 minutes to reduce the broth and make it more flavorful before you add the ginger.)
2. Add ginger slices and let simmer at least 15 minutes or longer. (Taste to see if you have as much ginger flavor as you'd like.)
3. While ginger simmers in stock, wash and slice mushrooms and thinly slice spinach leaves.
4. Clean green onion and slice into very thin slices.
5. Bring infused stock back to a low simmer, then add mushrooms and simmer 1 minute.
6. Add sliced spinach and simmer one minute more.
7. Turn off heat and add green onions, then serve soup hot.

RED BEAN GINGER SOUP

This creamy and soothing soup requires two things you may not often do in the kitchen, and they're worth the effort:

- 1) Soak your dry beans overnight before cooking
- 2) Use a blender or hand-held immersion blender after cooking the beans to create a smooth consistency.

Prep:

The day before cooking, soak 1 cup of red beans in 3 cups of water overnight in the refrigerator.

Bean Cooking instructions:

- 1) Drain the water from the beans.
- 2) In a pot, add the soaked red beans, six cups of fresh water, one tablespoon of grated ginger, and one teaspoon of paprika.
- 3) Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat and let it simmer for about an hour, or until the beans are tender.
- 4) Next, blend the mixture into a smooth paste using a blender or a hand-held immersion blender.
- 5) Finally, reheat the blended soup, and if desired, add a pinch of salt or sugar to taste.

LENTIL SOUP

This is a super-simple, bean soup that is fast, hearty and soothing to the body.



Ingredients

- 1 cup dried organic green lentils
- 4 cups water or chicken broth
- 3 carrots - chopped
- 3 stalks celery - chopped
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder

Instructions:

- 1) Rinse the lentils and place in a medium-size pot.
- 2) Add the carrots, celery and garlic to the pot.
- 3) Cover with 4 cups of water or broth
- 4) Add garlic powder.
- 5) Bring to a boil, and immediately reduce the heat to simmer.
- 6) Let simmer 30 minutes.

Enjoy!



BREAKFAST

Oatmeal with Spices and Applesauce

Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 cups water
- ½ cup whole milk
- ½ apple, chopped
- 2 dates, cut into small pieces
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp clove powder

Instructions:

- In a small pot, add rolled oats, apple, dates, spices and water.
- Bring water to boil, then immediately turn down to simmer until the oatmeal is fully cooked.
- Place desired amount of oatmeal into a bowl.
- Top with milk

Dates are rich in magnesium and iron which makes them a must during period days. Dates can help with regaining blood and alleviating period cramps.

BREAKFAST EGG AND AVOCADO TOAST

Ingredients:

- 2 slices Whole grain or sourdough bread
- 2 eggs
- ½ avocado, sliced
- Butter or olive oil



Instructions:

- In a frying pan, melt a bit of butter or pour in olive oil.
- Crack eggs into the pan and allow to fry for two or so minutes.
- Prepare bread by toasting in the toaster if desired. Place on plate.
- When egg has reached the desired firmness, remove from heat and place on top of bread. Cover with sliced avocado.

NUT AND SEEDS GRANOLA

Storebought granola is great, but this homemade granola contains ingredients that your body will love, especially during your period. It also contains a lot less sugar than those normally found in the grocery store.

Thanks to the Food Network Kitchen for this recipe to make a classic granola with uterus-friendly ingredients.

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup pure maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup sliced almonds (skin-on)
- 1/2 cup pecans, roughly chopped
- 1/4 cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- 3 tablespoons sunflower seeds
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt

Instructions:

1. Position an oven rack at the bottom of the oven, and preheat to 325 degrees F.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the maple syrup and oil together.
3. Add the almonds, pecans, coconut, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, flaxseed and salt, and toss to coat.
4. Spread the mixture out on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes.
5. Remove it from the oven, and use a spatula to toss the mixture.
6. Then return to the oven and continue to bake another 10 to 12 minutes until golden.
7. For a deeper, toasted version, bake another 10 to 15 minutes.

The granola can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

Mushroom & Spinach Omelet

Ingredients:

- 3 eggs
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Thinly sliced mushrooms
- Handful of fresh spinach, rinsed
- 1/3 cup gouda, grated or feta cheese chunks
- Sea salt

Instructions:

- In a big bowl, whisk eggs with a pinch of sea salt. Put to the side
- Lightly grease an Omelet pan with butter and a sprinkling of olive oil
- Add the mushrooms to the pan and saute until tender
- Add a handful of spinach to the pan and stir lightly
- Add the egg mixture to the pan and allow it to cook slightly.
- Place cheese on top and fold the Omelet
- Continue to heat until insides are cooked
- Add salt and pepper to taste

Enjoy this omelet with a side of fresh leafy greens, fruit or quinoa.



PERIOD POWER SALAD

The best thing about a salad is that you can customize it any way you like, and you'll always end up with a nutrient-rich bowl that can help reduce period cramps.

Start with nutrient-rich salad greens, like spinach and arugula. Top with fresh cut vegetables, beans and/or protein to make a healthy and hearty meal.

Ingredients: (these are suggested and you can add other vegetables that you like.)

- Spinach
- Arugula
- Cucumber
- Avocado
- Cucumber
- Grated carrots
- Garbanzo beans
- Pumpkin seeds
- Cooked sweet potato (can be cooked quickly by steaming.)
- Tuna, salmon or chicken

Instructions:

1. Place a bed of spinach and/or arugula in a bowl.
2. Top with chopped vegetables, beans, seeds and protein.
3. Drizzle dressing on top.

Dressing suggestion: Olive oil and balsamic vinegar, which is rich in antioxidants.

Roasted Chickpea and Sweet Potato Salad

This is more than your average salad; this is a hearty meal made of several menstruation-supporting ingredients. This is a fun recipe to make when you're in the mood to cook and have fun in the kitchen.

Ingredients

- 1 cup canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 5 cups mixed salad greens
- 1/4 cup tahini (sesame seed paste)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon warm water (or more as needed)
- 2 tablespoons [sesame seeds](#)

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 200°C.
2. Toss the chickpeas and sweet potatoes with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, salt, pepper, and smoked paprika.
3. Spread them out on a baking tray and roast for 20-25 minutes, or until the sweet potatoes are tender and the chickpeas are crispy.
4. While the chickpeas and sweet potatoes are roasting, prepare the tahini dressing. Whisk together the tahini, lemon juice, minced garlic, the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil, and warm water in a small bowl. If the dressing is too thick, add more water, a teaspoon at a time, until it reaches your desired consistency.
5. Place the mixed salad greens in a large bowl. Once the chickpeas and sweet potatoes are done, let them cool for a few minutes, then add them to the bowl with the greens.
6. Drizzle the salad with the tahini dressing, then sprinkle with sesame seeds. Toss everything together until the salad is well coated in the dressing.



DINNER

VEGGIES, BEANS, & GRAIN BOWL

If you're not Julia Child in the kitchen, or just don't have time for fancy recipes, you can still make delicious, healthy and cramp-soothing foods. Here's a recipe that includes foods to reduce inflammation and support your uterine health. We bet this becomes a go-to favorite recipe for dinner – anytime of the month!

Please note : The ingredients for bowls need advanced prep, such as cooked grains, cooked beans and steamed veggies. You'll find those cooking instructions at the beginning of this chapter.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cooked brown rice, quinoa or millet
- 1 cup cooked or canned beans, such as chickpea, black beans or pinto beans
- 1 cup steamed veggies chopped into bitesize pieces (broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, fennel, or cabbage)
- 1 cups raw leafy greens, such as spinach or arugula
- Olive oil
- Lemon slice

Instructions:

1. In a bowl or plate, add a scoop of rice, veggies, beans and greens.
2. Drizzle a small amount of olive oil over top. Squeeze juice from a sliver of lemon on top.
3. OR top with Tahini Dressing.

TAHINI DRESSING

Ingredients	Instructions
• 1/4 cup tahini • 1 small garlic clove, grated or finely minced • 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice • 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil • 1 tablespoon maple syrup • 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil • 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt • 3 tablespoons cold water, more if needed	1. Whisk everything but the water in a small bowl. 1. Add three tablespoons of cold water and whisk until creamy. For a thinner consistency, add a little more water. 2. Season to taste with additional lemon juice or salt.

CRUSTED SALMON

If you're really into cooking, you'll enjoy making this for yourself and family.

Women's Care's registered dietitian, [Laxmi Bruner](#), recommends this delicious chia crusted salmon recipe, which includes ingredients that can positively impact how you feel during your period. Enjoy this recipe with ½ cup of quinoa or brown rice for a balanced meal that's abundant in protein, fiber, healthy fats, and vitamins and minerals.

Ingredients for 4 servings

Preparation time: 30 – 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 4 (6-oz) salmon fillets
- Salt and pepper
- 1 large egg, whisked
- ¼ cup of almond flour
- ¼ cup of chia seeds
- 3 tbsps of olive oil
- 4 cups of chopped broccoli florets
- ½ cup of low-fat yogurt, plain
- 1 tbsp of fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp of fresh lemon zest
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 small cucumber, peeled and diced
-

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°
2. Season the salmon with salt and pepper to taste, then dip in the egg
3. Stir together the almond flour and chia seeds then dredge the salmon in the mixture
4. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat
5. Add the salmon and cook until seared on one side, about 3 minutes, then transfer to a baking sheet
6. Bake for 6 to 8 minutes until the flesh flakes easily with a fork
7. Meanwhile, place a steamer insert in a saucepan and fill with ½ inch of water
8. Add the broccoli and bring to a boil then cook until tender
9. Combine the remaining ingredients in a bowl to make the yogurt sauce

Serve the salmon hot with a dollop of yogurt sauce and steamed broccoli



Sometimes we just want something fun and tasty to consume during our period. Smoothies are an easy and refreshing way to get period-friendly, cramp-reducing nutrients.

The fruits, vegetables, and other healthy ingredients in Smoothies provide fiber that reduce inflammation and help you feel satisfied.

Smoothie-making requires a blender or food processor (like a Vitamix). You can use vegetables and fruits that are fresh or frozen. (Cooked vegetables are not recommended.)

These period-supporting recipes can get you started in your smoothie adventures, and also experiment with ingredients of your choice. Just refer to the Food Lists for the fruits, vegetables and seeds that will create the most beneficial concoctions.

Orange and Pineapple Smoothie – Anti-inflammatory

This smoothie is made with anti-inflammatory ingredients like pineapple, turmeric, and ginger.

In a blender, add

- 1 fresh orange
- 1 cup pineapple slices
- 1 knob of fresh ginger
- 1 knob of fresh turmeric
- 1 tablespoon flaxseed meal
- 1 1/2 cups of coconut milk (or almond or rice milk)

Blend at high speed. Pour into your smoothie glass and enjoy.

Green Smoothie – Detoxifying

You can add whatever leafy greens that are available like spinach or kale.

In a blender, add:

- 1 cup coconut milk (or almond or rice milk)
- 2 cups fresh spinach
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 avocado
- 1 apple.

Blend at high speed until smooth and pour into a glass. Enjoy!

Nuts and Grains Breakfast Smoothie – whole body support

In a blender, add:

- ½ cup ice cubes
- 1 ripe banana peeled
- 1 tablespoon tahini
- 1 date
- 1 tablespoon rolled oats
- 1 cup coconut milk (or almond or rice milk)

Blend at high speed until smooth and pour into a glass. Yum!

Avocado Citrus Blend - Detoxifying and anti-inflammatory

In a blender, add:

- 1 cup ice cubes
- 1 teaspoon peeled, fresh ginger root
- ½ ripe avocado
- ½ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- ½ ripe banana
- 2/3 cup orange juice

Blend at high speed until smooth and pour into a glass

Experiment with these ingredient combos

- **Berry spinach smoothie:**
Combine spinach, berries, and chia seeds
- **Ginger green smoothie:**
Combine ginger, kale, and cucumber



DESSERTS & SNACKS

SESAME GOODIE BALLS

Goodies, indeed! This recipe uses all beneficial ingredients to make your indulgence a benefit for your menstrual health.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup sesame seeds, toasted
- 1/4 cup flaxseeds
- 1/2 cup almond butter
- 2 tablespoons honey (optionally, use 3 mashed dates)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips (optional)

Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, combine the oats, sesame seeds, and flaxseeds.
2. Add almond butter, honey (or dates) and vanilla extract. Mix well until all ingredients are thoroughly combined. If the mixture seems too dry, you can add a bit more almond butter or honey.
3. If using, stir in the dark chocolate chips.
4. Using your hands, roll the mixture into small balls about an inch in diameter.
5. Place the balls on a tray lined with baking paper (or lightly greased with butter, margarine or coconut butter) and refrigerate for at least an hour or until firm.

Store in fridge for up to one week. They can be frozen for longer storage, too.

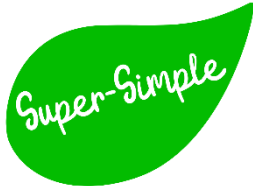
STUFFED DATES

This is the easiest, most satisfying recipe for a sweet tooth and to support your period power. Dates are sweet, so only a few are needed to feel like you're really indulging.

Ingredients:

- 3 - 5 Dates, pitted; medjool or Deglet Noor
- 3 - 5 nuts: Brazil, almonds or walnuts

Instructions: Hold a date and push a nut into the inside of it. Enjoy!

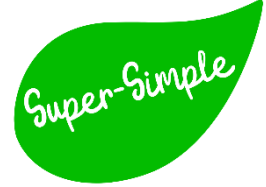


Super-Simple

EASY DATE AND NUT BUTTER SNACK

Ingredients:

- 3 - 5 Dates; pitted medjool or Deglet Noor dates
- A few tablespoons any nut or seed butter, such as peanut butter, almond butter, sunflower seed butter, or tahini (sesame seed butter)



Instructions:

- Cut a date in half
- Spread on the inside the nut or seed butter
- Enjoy!

DARK CHOCOLATE TAHINI COOKIES

Treat yourself with warm cookies right out of the oven. Made with body-loving ingredients, this is indulgence with benefits!

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup tahini (sesame seed butter)
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/4 cup honey or maple syrup
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups whole grain flour – or almond flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup dark chocolate chips – *not milk chocolate*
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds

Instructions:

1. Preheat your oven to 180°C and line two baking trays with baking paper, or lightly greased with butter, margarine or coconut butter.
2. In a large bowl, cream together the tahini, butter, and honey until light and fluffy.
3. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract until well combined.
4. In another bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the tahini mixture, beating just until combined.
5. Stir in the dark chocolate chips.
6. Using a cookie scoop or your hands, form the dough into balls and place them on the baking sheets. Flatten each cookie slightly with the back of a spoon, then sprinkle with sesame seeds.
7. Bake for 10-12 minutes or until the edges are golden brown. Allow the cookies to cool on the baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer them to wire racks to cool completely.



When crampy and fatigued, just sit back with a good book and a cup of tea. These teas will help you feel comfy and can help reduce discomfort.

Cinnamon tea

- Steep $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of cinnamon powder in hot water
- Add honey to taste
- Drink 2–3 cups 1–2 days before your period
- Drink $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon and 1 tablespoon honey in warm water 3 times during your period

Thyme tea:

1. Add fresh or dried thyme leaves to a cup or small teapot
2. Pour boiling water over the thyme
3. Cover and steep for 5–15 minutes
4. Strain the tea

Sesame-ginger tea

- Bring to boil a pot with about two cups of water.
- Add 1 teaspoon of fresh, grated ginger
- Add a tablespoon of sesame seeds
- Let steep for 5-15 minutes
- Strain the tea

Sesame seed cramp relief tea

- 1 Tablespoon raw sesame seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm water or plant-based milk (like almond or coconut milk)
- Pinch of turmeric powder

Instructions:

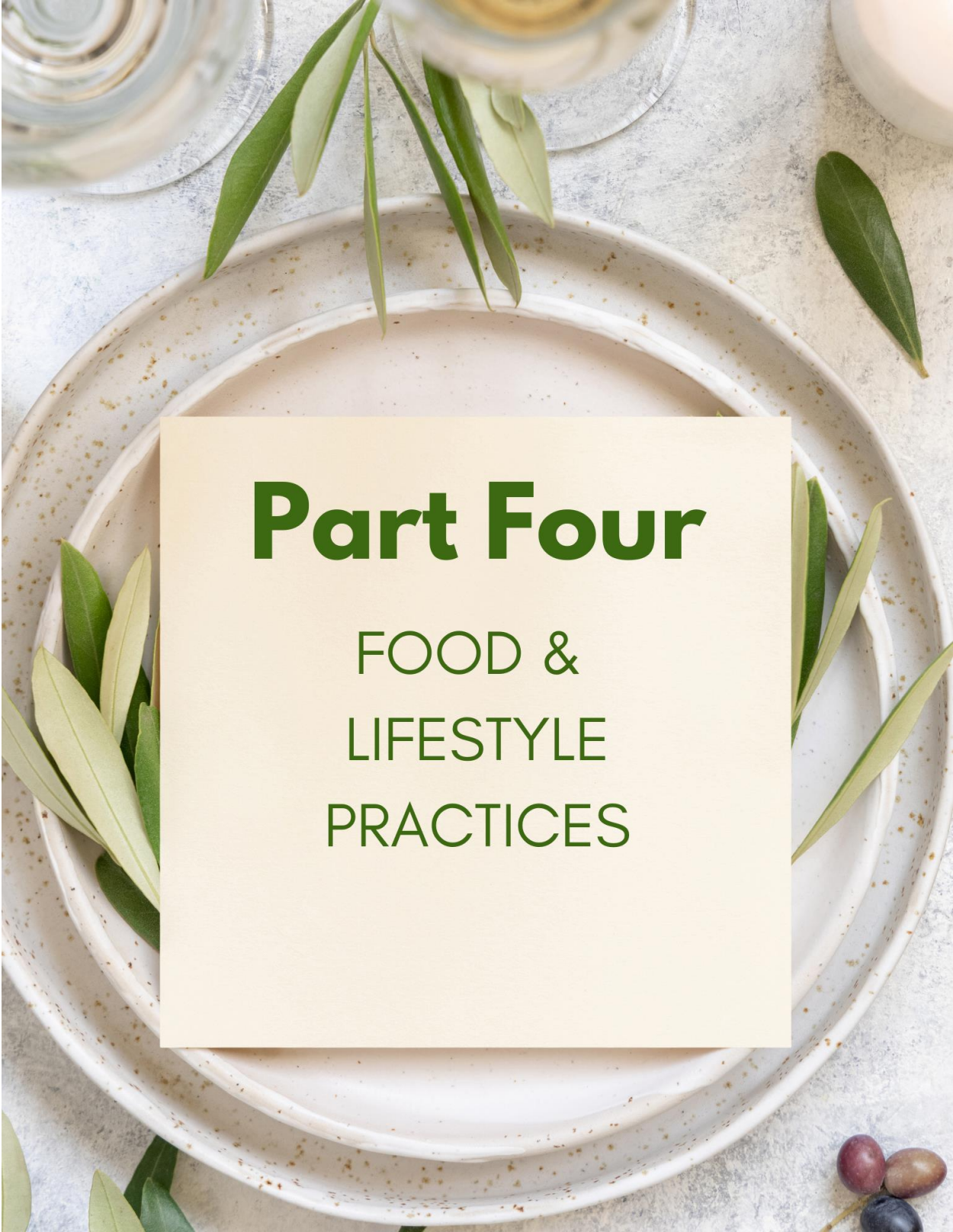
Grind a tablespoon of raw sesame seeds and mix them with warm water or plant-based milk (like almond or coconut milk). Add a pinch of turmeric for extra anti-inflammatory benefits. Consume this mixture once or twice a day, especially during the second half of your menstrual cycle when progesterone levels are typically lower.

Cool Lemon and ginger juice

This is not a tea but is a refreshing and delicious juice. Lemon contains calcium and magnesium which can help reduce period cramps and other PMS symptoms like muscle pain. Ginger's anti-inflammatory properties can minimize pain and reduce bloating.

How to make:

- Add 1 teaspoon of grated ginger to a pot of water and boil it for a few minutes.
- Add as squeeze of lemon juice and a dash of honey for taste.
- Drink about 2-3 cups a day to relieve period cramps.



Part Four

FOOD &
LIFESTYLE
PRACTICES

BODY-HONORING LIFESTYLE PRACTICES

Our dietary choices of whole foods can help us feel good all month long. However, food and nutrition are just part of the strategy for optimal health and wellbeing; a positive lifestyle and nourishing food practices also contribute to our vitality.

This section of the book helps us understand that food is important, and equally valuable is how we create it, live with it, and consume it.

The following sections can help make eating more of a soul-satisfying experience for you and your family. If you have a daughter who menstruates, share the information and suggested practices with her. This can influence her positive association between food, family, good health and more comfortable periods. And help create a deeper bond between the two of you.

YOUR BODY IS YOUR TEMPLE

You've heard the phrase, "Your body is my temple." What does this mean?

As a human being made of emotions, thoughts, gifts and abilities, our physical body is the sacred structure that holds it all together. Our body is the tangible form in which our soul dwells. Thus, it's a temple.

Our Body Temple is a miraculous creation that supports amazing functions that we can barely comprehend. It is a divine creation and perfectly designed exactly as it is.

As with a temple, or any sacred space, we honor and care for our physical body to show we appreciate it. We demonstrate our love and gratitude for its many miracles and blessing by showering it with love and respect. We offer the highest quality of life-sustaining foods.

In return, our Body Temple radiates a glowing positive energy and supports our joyful life. It helps us move with ease and beauty. It helps us live our dreams.

Perceiving our body as a temple can help us shift our judgements about it and positively influence the way we approach its care. It can help us develop a conscious lifestyle that honors our body and supports our glowing good health every day.

Keep reading for insights on how to relate to your body as a precious temple and treat it as the soul's sacred container. Soon, your Body Temple will glow radiantly and brightly as you strive for your best life!

MINDFUL EATING & BODY AWARENESS

A large component of a conscious lifestyle is mindfulness. Mindfulness is practice that asks us to leave behind our busy thoughts and become fully present to what is happening now. We let go of thoughts of the past, the future, judgements and expectations. Simple mindfulness practices, such as meditation or simply focusing on the “now” for a few minutes, helps to reduce depression, anxiety and stress.

In this Guidebook, we use mindfulness practices to help expand our awareness of our body and become real with what is happening inside. This will help us to develop new habits that honor and support our body so that we feel good, and also help us let go of old habits that may be dragging us down. Practicing mindfulness can help us develop a new and loving relationship with our body.

Let’s start our conscious lifestyle with a fun exercise called Mindful Munch.

Mindful Munch



Many of us have judgements about certain foods.

Oooh, I hate kale.” “Carrots! Yuck!” “I’d rather have a cookie than an apple.” And not just kids say this; often adults say the same things!

Our judgements against healthy foods may have developed in childhood. Perhaps our parents overcooked or undercooked certain vegetables, and they really did lose their appealing flavor. Or maybe parents didn’t serve certain foods, because *they* didn’t like them. Maybe we rejected a food because we didn’t like the color, and our parents let us get away with it.

Whatever the reason, these food judgements may have stayed with us, and to our detriment, for they may be preventing us from gaining body-nourishing foods because of what we *think* we know about them.

We'd like to change this and help awaken our appreciation of the flavor and benefits of body-loving sustenance. So, we introduce the *Mindful Munch* exercise. This is a sensorial eating experience that helps us to fully appreciate every aspect of a food.

Try the Mindful Munch exercise with an apple.

- Imagine you're eating an apple for the first time in your life.
- Hold the apple in your hand and see its round-ish shape and the bright color of its skin. Bite into it and hear the crunch. Chew the flesh and feel the juicy texture in your mouth. Taste the sweetness on your tongue. After biting, smell its sweet scent and enjoy a glimpse of its glistening interior.
- Chew slowly and allow your mouth to experience the texture and flavor. Keep chewing for a few seconds before swallowing, and then afterward, notice the flavor that remains on your tongue.
- After swallowing, become aware of the activities that take place within your body. Perhaps your tummy feels gurgling as it receives the apple. Maybe your brain becomes more alive from the splash of refreshment. Just notice.
- Now go even deeper. Think about the things that are occurring in the body that you can't sense; the nutrients of the apple are absorbed into your cells. They nourish your organs, which in turn support your energy, your immune system, and your brain health. The apple aids your digestion and makes it more efficient.

Once you fully experience all the actions that occur just from a bite of an apple, you may look at it differently.

This practice of mindful eating invites us to take our time, become aware, and engage our senses, so we may appreciate foods we have ignored. By removing our judgements and opening our minds, our world of healthy eating becomes bigger and more exciting.

Share this exercise with your family, particularly with a food they turn their noses up to, so that they, too, may shed their judgements and enjoy it in a new way.

Body Consciousness



Few of us make the connection between what we eat and how we feel. Developing this ability can help us navigate toward optimal health all month long.

This is called Body Consciousness.

Body consciousness is the awareness of the way our body feels when it's well, unwell, reacting to a certain substance, and functioning. It's a recognition of the signals in the body that say, "this is happening to me," "this is good for me," or "this is harmful."

Body consciousness is a practice in which we check in with our body to see how it responds to the food we ate. Perhaps we notice our stomach feeling bloated and achy after eating two fast-food burgers. Or feeling refreshed and energized after drinking a smoothie. Becoming aware of how our body responds to certain foods will motivate and guide us to eat more beneficial foods that enhance our vitality.

Body consciousness is an awareness we can easily develop. Again, it's a matter of becoming mindful by opening the mind and noticing. Try this simple practice:

After eating any food - healthy or junky - ask yourself, "How do I feel after eating that food? How is my body responding?" Take a moment to notice how your body, brain and mood respond right after eating it.

Then one hour later ask, "How do I feel now from eating that food?" Simply take a moment to check in and notice any sensations or feelings that may have been caused by the food.

At the end of the day, do the same.

Eventually, you may automatically make the connection between food items that support your body and help you feel good, and the ones that don't agree with you and make you feel sluggish. Becoming body conscious may motivate you to choose foods that make you feel good and forego the ones that cause you to feel unwell.

FOOD DIARY

Tracking your food intake with a Food Diary is a great way to develop a strong food-body connection. A Food Diary is simply a booklet or notebook in which you record the foods you eat throughout each day and the way your body feels after eating them. It's as easy.

On each page, record the following:

Date:

List of foods (use most of the page):

Body Responses:

In the List of Foods section, record each item you eat as you eat them, if possible. Waiting until the end of the day to remember everything you ate may cause you to forget items and overlook an important food-body response connection.

Use the Body Response section, note the following:

- 1) how your body, brain and mood feel right after eating a meal or certain foods
- 2) how you feel at the end of the day, in general
- 3) any sensations or feelings caused by the foods you ate the day before

By using your Food Diary daily, you'll be able to make an association between foods that cause you to feel energized and alive, or uncomfortable, sluggish or unwell. In time, you may naturally gravitate toward healthier foods and reject those un-nutritious foods that you used to eat out of habit.

Menstruation Food Diary

When it comes to menstrual health, a food diary can help you see how your food choices can affect your period. Use the same Food Diary format suggested above, and add to it a section to note your period symptoms.

Try this food diary experiment for three months:

Start by reflecting on your most recent period. Write down the symptoms you experienced, like cramps, bloating, headaches, and body aches. To the best of your recollection, rate the discomfort from 1-10. 1 = no discomfort at all. 10 = extreme discomfort and bedridden.

Now, make a commitment to add as many period-friendly foods and spices into your meals as you can enjoy into your lifestyle. Do your best to eliminate sugary, fatty, over-processed foods.

Daily, record your foods and body responses. On your next period, notice how your body feels and rate your symptoms on a scale of 1-10. Notice any differences, such as lighter cramps or less emotional, from your previous period.

Continue recording over your next two cycles and note the discomfort levels of your period symptoms. In a month or two, you may notice a substantial improvement in your period discomfort.

Sometimes it takes a few weeks for inflammation to subside in the body, and for your cells and muscles to eliminate the toxins. So, you may not notice the difference in your periods immediately. But with your commitment to honor your body and eat well, easier periods are your destiny.

Start a food diary today and embark on an empowering journey toward glowing good health!

THE VALUE OF MEAL TOGETHERNESS



Huddling in the kitchen preparing family meals has been a tradition since prehistoric times. In today's busy culture this custom has faded but is begging to return. Research shows the more often people eat with others, the more likely they are to feel happy and satisfied with their lives. This applies to adults as well as children.

Children enjoy even more benefits: they eat more fruits, vegetables and other nutritious foods, so they're healthier and experience lower rates of obesity. Children develop a taste and preference for nourishing whole food that continues throughout life.

Studies suggest that children who frequently share mealtime experience better physical and mental health and happier family relationships. Family meals are associated with greater well-being, lower depression, and fewer risk-taking behaviors among children and adolescents.

Whether your family consists of small children, grown children, siblings, or friends, togetherness at mealtimes can be body, mind and soul-enriching experiences.

Let Kids Pitch in with Cooking

Cooking meals with period-friendly foods is healthy for the entire family. So, when cooking, don't hold back from using an array of ingredients. When it comes to children, prepping

meals together sets the stage for their own healthy lifestyle and helps them develop an association with cooking, eating and fun.



Studies show giving children as early as age three or four helps build their confidence and independence. It also helps them grow up to be more responsible

Give young children simple tasks like washing the vegetables and stirring ingredients. As the child gets older, offer more complex tasks, like measuring ingredients and using kitchen equipment. adults.

Cooking can be a bonding and educational experience for teens, too. If you have a pubescent or adolescent daughter, create a mother-daughter ritual to cook together, even if it's only once a week. She'll learn why certain foods are healthy for her and how to prepare recipes that, soon, she may cook on her own.

Create an upbeat atmosphere with singing, talking, listening to music, making plans and dreams. Pretend to add ingredients of love, laughter, and joy. (For inspiration, watch the movie *Like Water for Chocolate*. Rent it on YouTube.) Invent your own culinary creations.

No matter what your child's (or adult's) age, your cooking collaboration can strengthen your relationship. It can become a daily or weekly ritual that you both look forward to and will remember for the rest of your lives.

Making Mealtime Special

What can we do to tear our kids and partners from their computer or TV at mealtimes? Try making it a joyfully irresistible experience! Here are a few tips to make mealtime a special occasion every day.

- Announce the meal and it's time in advance, so that the family will be prepared to attend. Ideally, regularly scheduled time is established and family members schedule around it.
- Set the table with pretty plates, napkins, flowers, or other centerpieces, like a fruit bowl. Aesthetic appeal will attract your family members and draw them out of their rote activities.
- Consider cloth napkins. They contribute to a special feeling, plus they're more environmentally friendly than paper. Perhaps personalize each family member's

napkin with embroidered initials, so they can use their own exclusively through a couple of meals before tossing into the laundry.

- Say grace or express gratitude for the food and blessings of the day. One person may take the lead or go around the table and each person share their expression. (See more about Gratitude Prayer ahead.)
- Enforce the rule: No devices at the table - no exceptions (this includes the parents!) Everyone should be able to not look at a screen for 30 minutes.
- Enjoy light conversation, such as sharing the events of the day, making plans, or discussing family topics, like an upcoming trip or visit from Aunt Jeanne. Analyze a book or idea or song. Avoid heavy topics that could generate conflict or negative emotions.
- Enjoy the food with loud expressions, such as “Yummmmm! This lentil soup is delicious!” Audible expressions of appreciation can not only make the cook feel appreciated, it also awakes our consciousness to the food and our body in a joyful way.
- After eating is complete, encourage everyone to pitch in to contribute to clean up. It takes only a few minutes to clear away dishes, and instills a sense of helpfulness and responsibility into every member of the family, especially children.

These suggestions can help make family mealtimes a special event every day, not just holidays.

Gratitude

Offering a prayer of gratitude is not a religious or spiritual practice; it's a mindful and heart-felt expression of appreciation. This simple action generates positive energy within us and helps us recognize the abundance around us.

Studies show that practicing gratitude, including through prayer, can reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance sleep quality. Additionally, it can help manage chronic pain, lower depression, and increase overall well-being.

A Gratitude Prayer spoken before eating invites us to acknowledge the goodness and healing powers of the food before us. It's also an opportunity to thank our marvelous body for serving us this day and every day of our lives. Taking a moment to center our body, mind and heart will generate good energy that envelopes the food and family.

The following is an example of a simple Gratitude Prayer. Of course, a prayer can be spoken with our own words of appreciation, inspired by our mind and heart. Make gratitude a normal part of mealtimes and as time goes by, notice any shifts in the family.

Gratitude Prayer

Thank you for this food,
For it will support my health.

Thank you for my health,
For it will enable my body.

Thank you for my body,
For it will help bring my dreams to reality.

Thank you for my reality,
for it is blessed with goodness.

And so it is! Blessed be! Ashe! Amen!

Body Gratitude Prayer

Speaking of prayer, make it a practice to thank your body, every day, for its beauty, functionality, and for all it does for you. Express gratitude and love for your body.

Say “thank you” to your arms, legs, breasts, heart, digestive system, face, and everything you can think of. Express specific reasons you are appreciative for how they help you live fully every day. Thank your mind, intelligence, skills, and divine gifts for helping you be who you are. Thank yourself for caring for your body.

Say with potent sincerity, “I love you, body! I love me!!!”

And so it is! Blessed be! Ashe! Amen!

A Body Gratitude Prayer is powerful and can energize and heal the body with high-frequency vibrations. Make it a ritual to start your day by expressing gratitude and loving your body, exactly as it is. Or pray at night before sleeping and thank your body for its service. Prayer is as nourishing as life-giving as any healthy meal.

MEAL PLANNING & SHOPPING LISTS



As we strive to incorporate healthier eating habits into our lifestyle, our typical meal planning and food shopping style may change. We may develop a greater awareness of the foods we select, and this may motivate us to break old habits. This is where meal planning and shopping lists can come in handy.

Meal planning involves envisioning and writing down the main dishes we'd like to serve in the upcoming few days. Knowing in advance what to prepare each day can streamline our daily schedule. No need to wonder, "what should I make tonight?" It's already decided.

It takes only a few minutes to create a meal plan, and this Food Guide (or any cookbook focused on whole foods) can help strategize a week of healthy eating.

Set aside some time on the same day each week, like Sunday afternoon, and draft your meal plan. Outline dish ideas for each day, keeping in mind the time you have to devote to cooking. Some days you may serve something fast, like lentils and steamed veggies. Other days you may have time for something more elaborate.

Invite family members to help. If you have a daughter, create a weekly ritual of planning together for another experience of creativity, communication and togetherness.

From meal planning comes a **shopping list**. By referring to the recipe for each dish we plan to cook that week, we discover the ingredients we need, and we write them on our list. This food list is a map to use in the grocery store. It ensures we stay focused on those good foods we need and not distracted by the less beneficial foods we may habitually buy.

Of course, temptation lurks at the grocery store! And it's not a crime to buy cookies or chips. But we do want to exercise our ability to make healthier choices that benefit the body.

Next time you're tempted at the store, try this exercise:

Let's say you see the cookies you love. Before taking the package from the shelf, ask yourself, "Will these sugary, empty-calorie cookies nourish my body temple? What will I feel like after eating them. What can I have instead that will nourish my body?"

Then think about the foods that will satisfy your sweet tooth while fueling your energy, such as fruit, or a trail mix of nuts and raisins.

Which of the two options do you choose? Hopefully, your desire to feel optimally well motivates your choice for fruit. But it's OK to choose the cookies and try again next time.

Shopping consciously like this helps prioritize health over short-lived sweetness (or saltiness, or over-processing.)

Family Food Shopping

Shopping can be a family affair and an educational experience for children and adolescents. While moving through the store and selecting the food items, describe how good it will taste when you prepare it, and explain why it's good for the body. (The food lists in this Guide provide that information.)

Engage your child and ask her how she would like it to be prepared. Ask if she knows why the food is good for the body. This will help cultivate her curiosity, insightfulness and positive attitude toward healthy foods.

HAPPY EATING!

Yes, food is important for our health, and equally valuable is how we create food, live with it, and consume it.

Radiating with vitality and feeling good is our body's natural state. Treating our body with respect and honor will help it to serve you throughout life. Eating well is an expression of self-love and self-appreciation.

We hope you love yourself enough to adopt a healthy lifestyle, not only to ease your menstrual discomfort, but to feel zesty and alive every day of your life!

Your divine gifts want and need to be expressed, and your body temple will help you do so.

Our mission is to help you love your body, embrace your periods, and be as healthy as you can be. We hope this book has helped.

If you have questions or need more information, contact us at info@RedDiamondSisters.com

Thank you for reading this Guidebook.

Love and blessings ~

Meloney Hudson

RedDiamondSisters.com

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