

# Cycle Issues, Infertility, Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine - Part Two



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In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), there are 14 classical energies. Some, while named after organs, don't necessarily involve the organ as in the liver energy. Others have no analogy in Western medicine, like the triple heater energy. In TCM, these energies or meridians enable Qi (Chi), another form of energy, to flow. When energy doesn't flow properly, the meridian becomes imbalanced and illness may occur. Female cycle issues are a commonly seen imbalance of energies and have been treated for millennia with TCM. These issues in particular typically have a few meridians that are usually involved. Each case must be evaluated independently, however, as other energies may also be involved.

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### The Liver Energy

The Liver is an energy often involved with both cycle issues and infertility. Many PMS-type emotional symptoms such as anger, anxiety, irritability, depression and frustration may all be symptoms of Liver Qi Stagnation. The person who suffers from Liver Qi stagnation is typically under a lot of stress due to a job they don't like, working late hours or other personal issues.

Once the Liver Qi starts to become stagnant or congested, physical symptoms start to develop. A woman with liver Qi stagnation will start to experience some of these typical PMS-type symptoms: irregular periods, dark colored blood with small clots, breast pain

with distention, headaches and the emotional symptoms noted above. These women may wake between 1:00 and 3:00 AM and find they are constantly worrying and frequently sighing. If chronic, they may also notice increased joint pain as the liver also manages muscles, ligaments and tendons.

Infertility due to Liver Qi Stagnation is a frequent cause of unexplained infertility. In TCM, it's believed that Liver stagnation causes blood stagnation in the pelvic cavity. This is why women with liver stagnation will often discharge dark blood or clots with their cycle. Acupuncture, in conjunction with herbal formulas, will usually do a good job of clearing the congestion over a course of 3 to 9 months (usually 3 months unless the situation is complicated). In our modern, high-tech, stress-oriented world, patients need to help find a way to reduce external stressors to enable

the treatments to work more effectively. While it might take 3 to 9 months to relieve the stressors associated with liver stagnation, some cases may resolve within a month or two.

This is more likely if a woman is relatively healthy with warm hands and feet, no PMS, and is "normal" active with fairly low stress levels.

### Blood Stagnation

Sometimes as a result of liver stagnation, blood stagnation may present with dark blood, clots, cold hands or feet and endometriosis. Left long enough, it may affect the Kidney energy and result in back or leg pain, or weakness of the back or legs. If blood stagnation is chronic enough, it will cause the moons found on a woman's fingernails, to begin to disappear. The pinkie moon will vanish first and then in succession the moon's on the 4th, 3rd and 2nd digit may also disappear. The more moons a woman loses, the worse her health becomes. Fatigue, malaise, difficulty recovering from any injury or illness will start to occur as a woman loses this vital Qi. Treatments for women with Blood Stagnation and Qi deficiency of this magnitude usually take



Pictured from left to right: Vicky (massage therapist), Dr. Lisa Patt, Dr. Erik Brown, Dr. Jenny Crosby, Brandon (Therapy CA), Michelle (Front Desk CA), Teresa (Office Manager)

longer to heal, as it may take up to two or three months to get one moon back and up to a year to get four moons back.

### Spleen Dampness

Often related to the foods we eat here in the west, spleen dampness may cause women to hold fluid at the time of their cycle. It may create discharge issues, joint pain and aggravate both liver and blood stagnation conditions. Good nutrition and exercise are necessary for all energy issues, but diet becomes especially important when dealing with Spleen dampness and Liver Stagnation. A woman with a spleen dampness diagnosis needs foods that are not considered cold (raw salads) or damp (dairy, fried food). A woman with spleen dampness will benefit from warming foods (like lamb) and spices (ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon) which can help tonify or warm a cold uterus

while warming and invigorating the blood and the liver energies.

Factors that will contribute to treatment taking longer include: being near age forty, having had numerous fertility drugs (over three cycles), birth control pills or ART procedures, having a history of elevated FSH, polycystic ovaries, endometriosis, sperm antibodies or a history of drug, alcohol or smoking abuse. The extent of the treatment does become dependent upon the relative health and history of each individual. While there's no quick path to resolving cycle or infertility issues, with consistent treatment, it's possible to undo many of the problems caused by these complicating factors.

At a minimum it takes three consecutive cycles (12 weeks) to do the foundation work for cycle regulation and fertility issues regardless of other factors.

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