



## Being a Healthy Woman

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A woman undergoes various physiological changes during her lifetime. A regular menstrual cycle is an important indicator of a healthy reproductive system. Menstrual cycle is regulated by two hormones, Luteinizing Hormone and Follicle-Stimulating Hormone. These are produced by the pituitary gland; they promote ovulation and stimulate the ovaries to produce estrogen and progesterone. The levels of these hormones decide the regularity of cycle.

Apart from regular exercise and managing stress diet plays an important role in maintaining the levels of these hormones and thereby having a regular cycle.

Foods rich in polyunsaturated fat and omega-3 fatty acids such as nuts and fish should be part of everyday diet. Calcium and vitamin D in diet reduce the symptoms of Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS). Folate (400µg)-should be included in the diet Folate promotes regular ovulation and increased progesterone levels in second half of menstrual cycle. Fruits like Pineapple and Papaya help to regulate periods. Beetroots are known to beat the pain during periods. Use of Jaggery instead of Sugar has resulted in better outcome in maintaining the regular cycle. Foods containing saturated animal fats, salts and caffeine should be avoided.

The spice Cinnamon can help regulate insulin levels which in turn may regulate the cycle especially in women with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) who have high insulin levels and irregular cycle. It is also known to reduce pain during periods. Turmeric contains curcumin which has many beneficial effects like reducing inflammation and improving mood during painful periods. It has

similar effect as estrogen and thus has also shown to decrease Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) effects. Ginger should also be included in the diet, vitamin C and magnesium content of ginger can help the uterus to contract and induce the cycle. Black pepper, sesame seeds and Parsley are also known to induce periods.

Maintaining a healthy weight, practicing yoga also helps in having regular cycle. Thus a woman who is physically and mentally fit can enjoy life to fullest.

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