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Women's Health Through Every Life Stage

Cycles, fertility, pregnancy, menopause and everyday wellbeing

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This guide is designed to be read, saved and shared. It uses practical language, keeps TCM terminology in context and clearly separates general education from symptoms that need medical assessment.

Before you begin

Women's health changes across life stages, and the same symptom can mean very different things at different times. This guide focuses on patterns worth tracking, sensible TCM conversations, pregnancy and medicine safety, and the symptoms that should be assessed rather than normalised.

What this book is designed to do

A practical reading approach

- Explain the topic in plain language without turning TCM terminology into a biomedical diagnosis.
- Help you notice useful patterns: timing, triggers, medicines, habits, associated symptoms and change over time.
- Show where everyday self-care may be reasonable and where medical review should come first.
- Make consultation more useful by helping you arrive with clearer information and questions.

A safety note

Emergency or red-flag symptoms come before complementary care. Tell healthcare professionals about prescription medicines, over-the-counter products, herbs, supplements, pregnancy, allergies and important chronic conditions.

CHAPTER 01

Cycle Tracking: What Changes Matter and When to Seek Care



A menstrual cycle does not have to be perfectly identical every month. A simple record can make changes easier to understand and discuss.

Key points

- Track patterns rather than one difficult day.
- Heavy bleeding, fainting, severe pain or pregnancy concerns need medical review.
- Bring the same record to both conventional and TCM appointments.

What to record

Start with the first day of bleeding, how long it lasts, whether flow is light, moderate or unusually heavy, and whether clots are new or different. Add pain, headaches, bowel changes, sleep, mood and any medication or supplement changes. The goal is not a perfect diary; it is enough detail to notice a pattern.

Why patterns help

Sleep, stress, illness, travel, contraception, pregnancy and perimenopause can all influence symptoms. Two or three months of notes can show whether a change is repeating. This also prevents one severe but unusual day from becoming the only memory at a consultation.

How TCM may use the history

A TCM practitioner may ask about timing, colour, discomfort, temperature sensations, digestion, sleep and energy as part of traditional pattern assessment. These observations belong to the TCM framework and do not replace tests or medical assessment when abnormal bleeding, anaemia or pregnancy complications are possible.

When changes deserve medical attention

Seek medical advice if bleeding becomes very heavy, you feel faint or unusually breathless, bleeding occurs after menopause, pain suddenly becomes severe, or you may be pregnant and have pain or bleeding. Persistent changes that affect work, sleep or daily life also deserve assessment.

Questions to bring

Ask what should be checked medically, what TCM can realistically support, how progress will be reviewed and whether herbs or supplements could interact with medicines or contraception.

CHAPTER 02

Menstrual Cramps: Where TCM May Help and When Pain Needs Assessment

Period pain is common, but severe or changing pain should not be normalised. Learn how TCM support can sit alongside proper medical assessment.

Key points

- Severe period pain is not something you simply have to tolerate.
- Track timing, bleeding, pain severity and associated symptoms.
- New severe pain, fainting, pregnancy possibility or very heavy bleeding needs medical attention.

Common does not mean “ignore it”

Menstrual cramps are common, but pain that regularly stops you from working, sleeping or carrying out normal activities deserves attention. Conditions such as endometriosis, adenomyosis, fibroids and other gynaecological problems can cause significant symptoms.

What to record

Note when pain begins, where it is located, whether it radiates, how heavy bleeding is, cycle regularity, clots, bowel or bladder symptoms and whether pain occurs outside menstruation. This information helps both TCM and conventional clinicians.

How TCM may approach symptoms

A TCM practitioner may assess pain quality, temperature sensations, energy, digestion and cycle patterns, then discuss acupuncture or herbal treatment. Any herb plan should take pregnancy possibility, medicines and other health conditions into account.

Do not hide conventional treatment

Tell your TCM practitioner if you use hormonal contraception, pain medicines, fertility treatment or have been diagnosed with a gynaecological condition. Likewise, tell your doctor about TCM herbs or supplements you are taking.

Seek prompt help for concerning symptoms

Get urgent medical care for severe sudden pelvic pain, fainting, very heavy bleeding with weakness or dizziness, fever with severe pelvic pain, or pain when pregnancy is possible. Persistent worsening pain should also be medically assessed.

Track changes rather than normalising them

Record cycle timing where relevant, pain, bleeding changes, sleep, mood, medicines and symptoms that are new or worsening. Ask what can reasonably be supported with TCM, what should be investigated medically, how progress will be reviewed and whether any herbal or supplement recommendation could interact with current treatment.

Use a symptom calendar

A simple calendar can capture pain, bleeding, sleep, hot flushes, mood, headaches, digestive symptoms and medicines. Patterns over two or three cycles, where relevant, are often more useful than remembering one difficult day. The record can also make it easier to notice when a symptom has genuinely changed and deserves medical evaluation rather than being normalised as “just part of being a woman”.

CHAPTER 03

PMS, Stress and Lifestyle: A Balanced TCM-Informed Guide



Premenstrual symptoms can vary from month to month. Learn how sleep, stress, food, exercise and TCM support may fit together without dismissing severe symptoms.

Key points

- Track symptoms across at least a few cycles rather than judging one difficult month.
- Sleep, stress and exercise can influence how symptoms feel.
- Severe mood symptoms or symptoms that disrupt daily life deserve medical advice.

PMS is not identical for everyone

Bloating, breast tenderness, headaches, irritability, low mood, food cravings and fatigue can appear before menstruation, but the combination and severity vary. A symptom diary across several cycles can show whether there is a consistent pattern.

Stress can amplify the experience

Busy periods at work, poor sleep and irregular meals may make premenstrual symptoms feel harder to manage. This does not mean symptoms are “all in your head”; it means the nervous system, sleep and daily routines can influence how the body experiences discomfort.

How TCM may be used

A TCM practitioner may use acupuncture, lifestyle advice or herbs based on a traditional pattern assessment. The aim should be realistic symptom support, not promises to permanently “balance hormones” without appropriate medical testing.

Keep the basics boring and reliable

Regular meals, enough sleep opportunity, moderate exercise and reducing excessive alcohol or caffeine may help some people. Consistent basics are often more useful than changing supplements every month.

When symptoms deserve medical attention

Seek medical advice if symptoms are severe, new, rapidly worsening, associated with very heavy bleeding, or significantly affect mood, relationships or work. Severe depression, panic or thoughts of self-harm require prompt professional help.

Track changes rather than normalising them

Record cycle timing where relevant, pain, bleeding changes, sleep, mood, medicines and symptoms that are new or worsening. Ask what can reasonably be supported with TCM, what should be investigated medically, how progress will be reviewed and whether any herbal or supplement recommendation could interact with current treatment.

Use a symptom calendar

A simple calendar can capture pain, bleeding, sleep, hot flushes, mood, headaches, digestive symptoms and medicines. Patterns over two or three cycles, where relevant, are often more useful than remembering one difficult day. The record can also make it easier to notice when a symptom has genuinely changed and deserves medical evaluation rather than being normalised as “just part of being a woman”.

CHAPTER 04

Pregnancy and Postpartum TCM: A Safety-First Guide

Pregnancy and the weeks after birth are periods when health can change quickly. TCM may be discussed for selected comfort concerns, but safety depends on clear communication with medical teams.

Key points

- Always tell the practitioner if you are pregnant or could be pregnant.
- Do not use herbs, supplements or strong manual techniques casually during pregnancy.
- Heavy bleeding, severe headache, chest pain, breathlessness, fever or reduced fetal movement require medical assessment.

Pregnancy changes the safety conversation

A practitioner should know how many weeks pregnant you are, whether the pregnancy is high risk, what medicines or supplements you use, and whether you have high blood pressure, diabetes or bleeding. Acupuncture point selection, heat therapies, herbs and manual techniques may need modification or avoidance.

Symptoms that need obstetric assessment first

Persistent bleeding, fluid leakage, severe abdominal pain, new severe headache, visual changes, sudden swelling, fever, chest pain, breathlessness, fainting or reduced fetal movement should not be managed as routine “imbalance”. Contact your maternity team or emergency services as appropriate.

After birth

Postpartum recovery involves sleep disruption, feeding, bleeding, wound healing, mood and physical recovery. TCM conversations can focus on comfort and general wellbeing, but new heavy bleeding, fever, worsening wound pain, severe headache, chest pain, breathlessness or significant mood symptoms need medical review.

Herbs and breastfeeding

If breastfeeding, tell the practitioner. Substances taken by the mother can sometimes reach breast milk. Avoid assuming a traditional product is automatically suitable for breastfeeding. Coordinate with a doctor or pharmacist when medicines are involved.

Make the plan simple

Prioritise rest where possible, adequate food and fluids, follow-up appointments, support from family and early help when symptoms are worrying. Complementary care should fit around these basics, not replace them.

CHAPTER 05

Menopause, Sleep and Everyday Wellbeing: A Balanced TCM-Informed View



A straightforward overview of preparation, common sensations, hygiene and when to tell your practitioner about medical conditions.

Key points

- Menopause experiences vary widely; not every symptom should be assumed to have one cause.
- Sleep, mood, bleeding changes and medicines are important parts of a proper history.
- New heavy bleeding, chest pain or significant mental-health symptoms need appropriate medical assessment.

A transition, not one identical experience

Some people have few symptoms around menopause, while others notice hot flushes, disturbed sleep, mood changes, joint discomfort or changes in concentration. The pattern can shift over time. A useful conversation starts with what is actually affecting you rather than assuming every symptom is “hormonal”.

Why sleep often becomes the first concern

Night sweats, stress, caring responsibilities, work and changes in sleep rhythm can all contribute. Track bedtime, night waking, hot flushes, alcohol and caffeine, medicines and daytime energy. This can help a doctor or TCM practitioner understand the pattern more clearly.

What a TCM consultation may explore

TCM assessment may include sleep, digestion, temperature sensations, energy, emotional wellbeing and other symptoms. Traditional pattern language is used within TCM and is not a replacement for medical evaluation of abnormal bleeding, thyroid problems, anaemia or other conditions that may present with overlapping symptoms.

Support should be individual, not marketed as a cure

Depending on suitability, TCM care may include acupuncture or other approaches aimed at symptom support. Expectations should remain realistic. If you use prescription medicines, hormone therapy or supplements, tell the practitioner so that care can be discussed safely.

When medical review matters

Seek medical advice for new or heavy bleeding after periods have stopped, persistent pelvic pain, unexplained weight loss, significant depression or anxiety, or symptoms that are rapidly worsening. Emergencies such as chest pain, severe breathlessness or stroke-like symptoms require urgent care.

Track changes rather than normalising them

Record cycle timing where relevant, pain, bleeding changes, sleep, mood, medicines and symptoms that are new or worsening. Ask what can reasonably be supported with TCM, what should be investigated medically, how progress will be reviewed and whether any herbal or supplement recommendation could interact with current treatment.

Use a symptom calendar

A simple calendar can capture pain, bleeding, sleep, hot flushes, mood, headaches, digestive symptoms and medicines. Patterns over two or three cycles, where relevant, are often more useful than remembering one difficult day. The record can also make it easier to notice when a symptom has genuinely changed and deserves medical evaluation rather than being normalised as “just part of being a woman”.

CHAPTER 06

Chinese Herbs: Questions to Ask Before Taking a Formula

Learn why medication lists, allergies, pregnancy, supplements and ongoing medical care should be discussed before using herbal products.

Start with your full medication list

Herbs and supplements can interact with medicines or duplicate ingredients. Tell the practitioner about prescription drugs, non-prescription medicines, vitamins, supplements and products from other clinics.

Share important health information

Pregnancy, breastfeeding, allergies, kidney or liver problems and upcoming surgery can affect what may be appropriate. Do not assume a product is suitable simply because it is described as natural.

Understand the product

Ask what you are taking, how much to use, how often, for how long and what reactions should prompt you to stop. Keep the original packaging and directions where possible.

Do not delay necessary medical care

Persistent, severe or worsening symptoms deserve proper assessment. Traditional products should not be used to postpone urgent or necessary conventional medical care.

Tell the practitioner what is already in your body

Bring the names or photographs of prescription medicines, over-the-counter products, vitamins, supplements and other herbal products you take. Include allergies and previous reactions. Pregnancy, breastfeeding, liver or kidney disease and other significant conditions can change what is appropriate. This information is not an inconvenience; it is part of making herbal decisions more safely.

Natural is not the same as automatically safe

A plant-derived ingredient can still have physiological effects, interact with medicines or be unsuitable for a particular person. Product quality also matters. HSA advises consumers to be cautious of dubious products, exaggerated claims and products that may contain undeclared potent medicinal ingredients. Use reputable sources and avoid buying purely on testimonials or “quick cure” promises.

Know what you are taking and why

Ask what the formula or product is intended to support, how it should be taken, what symptoms should lead you to stop and seek advice, and when it should be reviewed. Keep your doctor informed when you are receiving ongoing medical care, especially if new medicines are started or doses change.

Singapore regulates health products, but consumers still need judgment

Health Sciences Authority guidance is an important reference for product safety. Products promoted online or through informal channels can still carry exaggerated claims, undeclared ingredients or quality concerns. A professional label, celebrity testimonial or the word “natural” is not proof that a product is suitable for you. Use reputable sources and be cautious of products promising rapid cures for many unrelated conditions.

A prescription should be understandable

You do not need to memorise every herb, but you should know whether you are taking a customised formula, a proprietary product or a supplement, how often to take it and for how long. Ask what the main purpose is and when the prescription should be reviewed. If the plan changes, keep the most recent instructions rather than relying on an older packet or a family member’s advice.

Interactions are not limited to prescription medicines

Over-the-counter painkillers, cold remedies, vitamins, supplements, traditional products and alcohol can all matter. Bring photographs of labels if remembering names is difficult. If a doctor starts a new medicine while you are using Chinese medicine, tell the TCM practitioner; if a TCM prescription changes, tell the doctor or pharmacist when relevant.

Stop and seek advice when a reaction is concerning

Unexpected rash, swelling, breathing difficulty, severe vomiting, fainting, yellowing of the eyes or skin, marked worsening of symptoms or other serious reactions deserve prompt

medical attention. Do not keep taking a product simply because someone tells you that discomfort means the body is “detoxing”. Serious or persistent reactions need assessment.

Do not share personalised prescriptions casually

A formula prepared for one person may not be appropriate for a spouse, parent or friend with a similar-sounding symptom. Differences in medicines, pregnancy, allergies, chronic disease and the underlying cause matter. Sharing leftovers also makes it harder to know exactly what was taken if an adverse reaction occurs.

Storage and labels help prevent simple mistakes

Keep products in their original labelled containers where possible, away from children, heat and moisture. Do not mix several powders into an unlabelled jar or keep old packets without dates. If a reaction occurs, being able to identify exactly what you took makes medical assessment easier. Discard products that are expired, contaminated, badly stored or no longer clearly identifiable.

Children, pregnancy and frailty deserve extra caution

Dosing and suitability can change substantially for children, pregnancy, breastfeeding, older adults and people who are frail or have impaired liver or kidney function. Do not assume that a smaller amount of an adult product is automatically appropriate for a child. These situations deserve individual assessment, careful product selection and clear instructions.

CHAPTER 07

Your First TCM Consultation in Singapore: What to Expect



A practical guide to preparing for a TCM consultation, what information to bring and what a careful assessment may involve.

Before you go

Write down your main concern, how long it has been present and what makes it better or worse. Bring a list of prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Relevant medical reports can also help the practitioner understand context.

What the practitioner may ask

A TCM consultation may include questions about sleep, appetite, digestion, energy, temperature preferences and other patterns in addition to the main complaint. The purpose is to understand the person as a whole rather than to rely on one symptom alone.

What you should ask

Ask what the practitioner is considering, what the proposed approach involves, how long a session takes, what it costs and whether there are reasons it may not be suitable for you.

When conventional medical care comes first

Sudden severe symptoms, chest pain, difficulty breathing, loss of consciousness, major bleeding, stroke-like symptoms or rapidly worsening illness require urgent conventional medical attention. Call 995 in an emergency.

What makes a first consultation useful

The first visit does not need to produce a dramatic answer in a few minutes. A useful consultation should help you organise the problem: what you are experiencing, how long it has been happening, what has already been investigated, what medicines or supplements you use, and what you hope to improve. If a recommendation is made, you should understand what it is intended to support, what practical limits apply and when the plan should be reviewed.

Bring the information that prevents guesswork

A medicine list, allergy information, recent medical reports and a short timeline of symptoms can save time. For recurring problems, note what makes symptoms better or worse and whether sleep, meals, stress, movement or menstrual cycle changes are relevant. You do not need to stop conventional treatment before seeing a TCM practitioner; in fact, accurate information about current care makes the consultation safer.

Questions you are allowed to ask

Ask why a particular treatment is being suggested, whether there are alternatives, what sensations or side effects may occur, how many sessions should pass before reviewing progress, and whether anything should be discussed with your doctor or pharmacist. A responsible consultation should make room for questions rather than relying on authority alone.

Prepare a one-minute summary before you arrive

A useful first sentence is simple: what the main problem is, when it started, how often it happens and what you most want help with. Then add the information that changes decisions - major diagnoses, current medicines, allergies, pregnancy where relevant, recent procedures and important test results. This gives the practitioner a clear starting point without requiring you to remember every detail in perfect order.

Tongue and pulse are part of the TCM framework

Some TCM consultations include looking at the tongue and feeling the pulse at the wrist. These observations are interpreted within traditional diagnostic frameworks. They are not substitutes for blood tests, imaging, physical examination or a biomedical diagnosis when those are needed. If a traditional term sounds like the name of a modern organ disease, ask the practitioner to explain exactly what is meant.

A treatment plan should have a review point

Whether the recommendation is acupuncture, Tuina, Chinese medicine, lifestyle advice or a combination, ask how progress will be judged. A useful plan has a realistic review point rather than continuing indefinitely without reflection. Improvement might mean sleeping longer, walking farther, having fewer headache days or relying less on rescue medication - the goal should be concrete enough that both you and the practitioner can discuss whether the approach is worthwhile.

Tell the practitioner when something changes

New medicines, a new diagnosis, pregnancy, surgery, a fall, worsening symptoms or an unexpected reaction can change what is appropriate. Do not assume the information you gave months ago is still enough. Updating the practitioner is especially important when herbs, supplements or manual treatment are involved, because safety decisions depend on your current situation.

Leave with an explanation you can repeat

Before leaving, you should be able to explain in plain language what is being recommended, what it is intended to support, how often to use it, what normal reactions might occur, what warning signs matter and when to review. If you cannot explain the plan back to yourself, ask again. Clear communication is not a luxury; it is part of responsible care.

What a follow-up visit should clarify

A follow-up should not simply repeat the first appointment. It should compare what changed, what did not, whether any new symptoms appeared and whether the original goal still makes sense. If treatment has been tried, describe what happened between visits rather than only how you feel at that moment. This helps distinguish a temporary good day from a consistent trend and gives both sides a reason to continue, modify or stop a plan.

When it is reasonable to pause or seek another opinion

If you do not understand the explanation, feel pressured into a long package, are repeatedly told that worsening symptoms are always a good sign, or are discouraged from obtaining necessary medical assessment, it is reasonable to pause. A second opinion can be useful when the diagnosis is unclear, the recommended course is unusually long or expensive, or your condition is changing in a way that has not been adequately explained.

Practical consultation checklist

- What is the main concern, and when did it start?
- What clearly makes it better or worse?
- Which medicines, supplements or herbs are you taking?
- Are there allergies, pregnancy considerations or chronic conditions that matter?
- Which symptoms are new, severe, persistent or changing quickly?
- What is the single most useful outcome you want from this consultation?
- What would mean conventional medical review or emergency care should come first?

Contact Shande

For appointments and general enquiries, use WhatsApp or WeChat. Email is not presented as a routine customer-service channel.

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References & further reading

The chapters in this guide are drawn from the Shande Health Library. Key safety points are linked back to the public-health or professional sources cited in those articles.

General health education | Not a diagnosis | Emergency in Singapore: 995