

YIN SHI

GYNAECOLOGY

Premenstrual syndrome

Chinese dietetics protocol sheet

Seven to ten days before the period, the body shifts: Blood descends towards the uterus and Liver Qi must accompany it. Everything that blocks or exhausts reveals itself then, month after month, in the same window. PMS is not a hormonal fatality: it is the monthly thermometer of the terrain, and each MTC pattern has its dietary strategy.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONDITION

Premenstrual syndrome

Premenstrual syndrome gathers, over the seven to ten days preceding the period, a bundle of physical and emotional signs that fade when the period arrives. Modern medicine reads it as sensitivity to progesterone and oestradiol fluctuations, relayed by serotonin and allopregnanolone; MTC sees the monthly shift mechanism: Blood descends towards the uterus, Liver Qi must accompany it, the Spleen must hold, the Kidneys must anchor. Whatever is off the rest of the month then reveals itself in a regular window: irritability, breast tension, bloating, fatigue, cravings, heaviness. PMS is not a hormonal fatality but a terrain indicator, and it is the MTC pattern that makes the strategy, not the PMS label.

SUGGESTIVE SIGNS

- Irritability, mood swings, inner tension in the days before the period
- Breast tension or pain, sensation of swollen breasts
- Bloating, abdominal distension, altered transit
- Water retention: oedema, cyclic weight gain
- Marked fatigue, sugar or starch cravings
- Lower back or pelvic pain as the period approaches
- Headaches, acne, hot flushes depending on the pattern
- Signs disappear or clearly recede when the period arrives

TONGUE & PULSE

Variable by pattern: normal tongue or red edges with wiry pulse in stagnation; red spotted tongue and rapid pulse if fire; pale tongue and fine pulse in deficiencies; glutinous coating in Dampness. See the differential.

FAVOURABLE TERRAIN

Terrain of cyclic repetition: cycles of life regulated but constrained (stress, overwork, rumination), sedentary living, dispersed or irritating diet in the luteal phase, silent deficiencies (magnesium, iron, omega-3). PMS settles where the monthly shift finds an organ already weakened.

THE TCM DIFFERENTIAL

Which pattern applies?

PMS does not exist in the singular: it is the same cyclic window that illuminates different terrains. The table below crosses the distinctive signs to identify the MTC pattern or patterns at play; in practice, profiles combine.

TCM PATTERN	DISTINCTIVE SIGNS	TONGUE & PULSE	QUICK SIGNAL
Liver Qi stagnation	Breast tension, irritability, sighing, bloating, subcostal distension	Normal tongue or red edges, wiry pulse	***Tense breasts + irritability***
Liver Fire rising	Explosive anger, acne, temporal headaches, bitter mouth, early periods	Red tongue with spotted edges, wiry and rapid pulse	***Irritability + rising heat***
Liver Blood deficiency	Light periods, fatigue, dizziness, blurred vision, light sleep, pale nails	Pale tongue, fine pulse	***Mild PMS + marked exhaustion***
Spleen Yang deficiency	Fatigue, sugar cravings, bloating, oedema, chilliness, loose stools	Pale swollen tongue, weak pulse	***Fatigue + sugar craving***
Kidney Yang deficiency	Cold painful lower back, ankle oedema, marked chilliness, delayed periods	Pale damp tongue, deep slow pulse	***Lower back + cold + oedema***
Kidney and Liver Yin deficiency	Hot flushes, insomnia, agitation, night sweats, tinnitus, dryness	Peeled red tongue, fine rapid pulse	***Deficiency heat + difficult night***
Liver Blood stasis	Fixed precise pain, dark clots, localised painful PMS	Purplish or spotted tongue, wiry rough pulse	***Fixed pain + clots***
Cold-Dampness in the Spleen	Cyclic weight gain, heavy breast tension, brain fog, mucus, general heaviness	Swollen tongue with glutinous white coating, slippery pulse	***Heaviness + retained water***

In practice, patterns combine: the Liver-Spleen duo is the most frequent (irritability AND fatigue, tense breasts AND sugar cravings). Prioritise the dominant pattern, combine the overlapping strategies; Yin Shi Academy estimates mixed PMS at 60-70%. The phase strategy: regulate stagnation in the first half of the luteal phase (from day 15 of the cycle, D15, to day 20), then tonify. Rarer associated patterns: Heart Blood deficiency (anxiety, palpitations) and Blood heat (early heavy periods) fold into the Blood and Fire plans; Chong-Ren disharmony remains the reading frame of the cycle.

DIETARY PLANS

One plan per pattern

1 Liver Qi stagnation · *gān yù qì zhì* 肝郁气滞

The cardinal pattern, the most frequent: when Liver Qi stops flowing, it tenses every month at the same moment. Breast tension, irritability, sighing, bloating. Strategy: light aromatics that circulate, nothing that freezes or overheats.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Turmeric	Warm	Bitter, Pungent	Moves Liver Qi and Blood	*The daily pinch in dishes, with a turn of black pepper for bioavailability.*
Mint	Cool	Pungent	Moves Liver Qi, frees the head	*As an evening tisane: the head is released, irritability eases.*
Fennel bulb	Neutral	Sweet, Pungent	Moves Qi, soothes the centre	*Braised or in a warm salad: premenstrual bloating loves its sweetness.*
Basil (Aromatic)	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Moves Qi, harmonises Liver and Stomach	*Chopped over hot dishes: the aromatic of the frustrated Liver.*
Black radish	Cool, Neutral	Pungent, Sweet	Descends Qi, frees Liver and Stomach	*Grated with oil and salt: the vegetable of the congested centre.*
Kumquat	Warm	Sweet, Acrid	Moves Liver Qi, harmonises the centre	*Two or three whole ones to chew in the evening, peel and flesh together.*
Mandarin (peel)	Warm	Bitter, Pungent	Chen pi moves Qi and transforms Dampness	*A dried zest in soup or tisane: the classic for blocked Qi.*
Celery	Cool	Sweet, Bitter	Cools, helps Liver Yang descend	*Stewed or juiced: the vegetable of the tense weeks.*
Saffron	Neutral	Bitter	Nourishes Blood, moves it, calms the Shen	*Fifteen stigmas in warm water in the evening: the spice with a direct clinical trial on PMS.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Coffee	Warm	A stimulant that disperses and exhausts: it masks fatigue without fixing circulation.
Cayenne Pepper	Hot	Hot-pungent spice disperses violently: it relieves for ten minutes then stagnation rebounds.
Late heavy meals	Variable	A heavy dinner congests the Liver at the hour it should release: light, early dinner in phase 4.
Refined sugars	Variable	Peak then energy crash: premenstrual cravings feed themselves.

GOLDEN RULE

What circulates soothes: light aromatics and regular meals rather than heavy dishes, and never anything that freezes.

MODERN NUTRITION

Omega-3: the 2022 meta-analysis (J Obstet Gynaecol Res) shows a reduction in PMS symptoms; sardines, mackerel and anchovies contribute. Magnesium: trials on retention and mood match the expected soothing effect here. Saffron: the BJOG 2008 trial (30 mg/day) is effective on PMS, a rare case where the classic spice and the study say the same thing.

2 Liver Fire rising · *gān huo ˇ shàng yán* 肝火上炎

Stagnation left to itself heats up: same window as the previous pattern, but anger becomes fire, explosive crises, acne, temporal headaches, bitter mouth, early or heavy periods. The strategy changes nature: warm aromatics recede, bitter and cool descending take over.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Chamomile	Cool	Sweet	Soothes the Liver, calms the rising fire	*The evening tisane when the day has boiled over: one slow cup.*
Celery	Cool	Sweet, Bitter	Cools the Liver, lowers rising Yang	*Fresh juice in the morning or gently braised: the descending vegetable.*
Wild celery : ache des marais	Cool	Sweet, Bitter	Soothes Liver Fire, descends	*In soup or juice: the ancients' celery, more drastic than the cultivated one.*
Olive	Cold	Bitter	Cools and soothes Liver Fire	*A few olives or a drizzle of first-press oil: the fresh fat that tempers.*
Mint	Cool	Pungent	Disperses Liver heat, frees the head	*Fresh here: it is its nature that works, in tisane or chopped.*
Chicory, Frisée, Escarole	Cold	Bitter	The cool bitter that drains Liver Fire	*In a light salad or briefly braised: the bitterness that descends.*
Vervain	Cool	Bitter	Soothes the Liver and the Shen, cool	*The late-evening tisane: it lays the fire down and prepares sleep.*
Spinach	Cold	Sweet	Nourishes and cools, helps Blood stay low	*Just wilted in the pan: it nourishes without heating.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Coffee	Warm	Caffeine feeds the agitation and anxiety of this pattern: light tea at best, nothing after noon.
Cayenne Pepper	Hot	Fire on fire: suspend entirely in the luteal phase.
Cinnamon	Hot	Hot and rising: excellent in the Kidney-Yang pattern, here it feeds the blaze.
Fried foods and grilled items	Variable	Dry heat of quick cooking feeds the blaze: steam, braise, broth.

GOLDEN RULE

Descend and cool without freezing: cool bitter works where warm aromatic fails.

MODERN NUTRITION

Caffeine is the dietary factor most associated with the psycho-affective symptoms of PMS in the SWAN cohort (2007). Fast sugars feed the rises and falls that stoke irritability; bitter green vegetables bring magnesium and folates.

3 Liver Blood deficiency · *gān xuè xū* 肝血虚

When the Liver Blood reservoir is low, the uterus fills poorly: light periods, discreet PMS but marked exhaustion, dizziness, blurred vision, light sleep, fragile nails. Nothing to disperse here: everything to rebuild. The strategy is that of substance, dense, sanguine, regular.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Chicken liver	Warm	Sweet, Bitter	Nourishes Blood and Essence, the most direct	*In pâté or briefly pan-fried: the Liver stores Blood, and Blood and Essence share the same source.*
Beef	Warm	Sweet	Tonifies Qi and Blood, warm flesh	*In pot-au-feu or braised: the meat that rebuilds without emptying.*
Chicken egg	Neutral	Sweet	Nourishes Blood and Yin	*Soft-boiled or poached: the runny yolk is the nourishing part.*
Spinach	Cold	Sweet	Nourishes Blood, moistens	*Just wilted with a drizzle of oil: plant iron absorbs better accompanied.*
Black pudding, pork blood	Neutral	Salty	Blood nourishes blood: the most direct tonic	*A slice pan-fried with onions: the Blood's return of flame.*
Black Sesame	Neutral	Sweet	Fills the Jing, nourishes Blood	*Dry-roasted on the morning porridge: the grain that rebuilds Essence.*
Cherry	Hot	Sweet	Nourishes Blood, sweet-warm	*A handful in season, as dessert or juice: the Blood fruit.*
Peach	Hot	Sweet, Sour	Nourishes Blood and fluids	*Pan-fried or roasted: the sweet-warm that restores colour.*
Oyster	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Nourishes Yin and Blood, rich in iron and zinc	*A dozen raw with lemon at cycle start: the mineral feast.*
Avocado	Cool	Sweet	Nourishes Blood and Yin, nourishing fat	*Plain, with salt and lemon: the sweet fat that builds.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Tea and coffee with meals	Variable	Tannins block iron absorption: drink an hour away; the perfect meeting between science and 'do not disperse'.
Highly dispersing foods	Variable	Too many circulating aromatics (mint, strong spices) disperse what is lacking: measure.
Fasting and skipped meals	Variable	Blood is not rebuilt on an empty plate: regularity is the first tonic.

GOLDEN RULE

Substance first: dense, sanguine, three real meals, and nothing that disperses.

MODERN NUTRITION

Haem iron, B12 and folates: the blood-building contributions par excellence, and the vitamin C of a fruit at meal's end doubles the absorption of plant iron. Iron deficiency is the first nutritional factor of tiring periods.

4 Spleen Yang deficiency · *pí yáng xū* 脾阳虚

When the Spleen's fire weakens, cycle's end becomes marshland: fatigue, sugar cravings, bloating, oedema, chilliness, loose stools. The Spleen was meant to transform and hold; it no longer has the fire to do so. The strategy is gentle-warm nourishing: all cooked, nothing cold, refined sugar out of the field.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Oats	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tonifies the Spleen gently, warm grain	*As porridge in the morning: the hot base that holds all day.*
Millet	Cool	Sweet, Salty	Tonifies Spleen and Stomach, the easiest grain	*As porridge or pancakes, always served very hot: its cool nature is corrected by cooking.*
Yam	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Tonifies Spleen, Lung and Kidney	*In soup or purée: the tuber that builds without weighing.*
Jujube	Warm	Sweet	Tonifies Qi and Blood, the Spleen fruit	*Three fruits in soup or the evening tisane: the da zao of the centre.*
Pumpkin	Warm	Sweet	Tonifies the centre, sweet-warm	*In soup, purée or roasted: the orange that warms.*
Chicken	Warm	Sweet	Tonifies Qi and Blood, hot flesh	*In broth or roasted: the convalescent meat.*
Sardine	Neutral, Warm	Sweet	Tonifies the Spleen, omega-3	*Pan-fried or in oil: the small oily fish of the centre.*
Anchovy	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tonifies Spleen and Stomach	*In mild marinade or on warm toast: the salt that works.*
Dried Ginger	Warm	Pungent	Warms the centre, disperses cold	*A slice in hot water after meals: the digestive ember.*
Cinnamon	Hot	Pungent, Sweet	Warms Spleen and Kidney	*A pinch in the porridge: the morning's gentle fire.*
Miso	Neutral, Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tonifies the Spleen, fermented	*In soup in the morning: the ferment that nourishes and wakes the Spleen.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Raw vegetables and iced drinks	Variable	Cold extinguishes the Spleen's fire exactly when it lacks it: all cooked, all hot.
Cold sweetened dairy	Variable	Cold, damp and sweet: the triple handicap of Spleen Yang.
Refined sugars	Variable	Peak then crash: this pattern's sugar craving feeds itself.
Excess liquids with meals	Variable	Drowning the digestive ember by drinking a litre at meals: small hot sips instead.

GOLDEN RULE

All cooked, all hot, three regular meals: the Spleen's fire is rebuilt in soup, not on the fly.

MODERN NUTRITION

Glycaemic stability is the parallel strategy: complete regular meals, protein from the morning; fast sugars amplify cravings and irritability (SWAN cohort). Salt is moderated: water retention adds to Dampness.

5 Kidney Yang deficiency · *shèn yáng xū* 肾阳虚

When the fire of the Ming Men declines, cycle's end becomes winter: cold painful lower back, ankle oedema, marked chilliness, deep fatigue, delayed pale periods. The Kidney was meant to anchor and warm; it no longer has the ember. The strategy is deep-warm: hot flesh, Ming Men spices, nothing raw.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Walnut	Neutral	Sweet	Tonifies the Kidney, warms the kidneys	*A handful as a snack: the Kidney's dried fruit that tops up omega-3.*
Chestnut	Warm	Sweet	Tonifies Kidney and Spleen, sweet-warm	*As purée or roasted: the Ming Men winter fruit.*
Mutton & lamb	Hot	Sweet, Salty	Warms the Ming Men, hot flesh	*In a long stew with spices: the meat for inner cold.*
Prawn	Warm	Sweet	Tonifies Kidney Yang	*Quick pan-fry or in soup: the warm crustacean that tonifies.*
Oyster	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tonifies the Kidney, nourishes Essence	*A dozen raw at cycle start: Essence and zinc.*
Mussel	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tonifies Kidney and Essence	*Marinière style: the warm pot that rebuilds Yin-Yang.*
Yam	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Tonifies the Kidney without heating	*In soup with ginger: the anchoring tuber.*
Pork Ham	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Nourishes the Kidney, tonifies Qi and Blood	*As lardon or a slice in soup: the corpus's sweet-salty-warm.*
Fennel (seed)	Neutral	Pungent	Warms the Kidney gently	*As tisane after meals: the digestive warmer that descends.*
Cinnamon	Hot	Pungent, Sweet	Returns fire to the Ming Men	*A pinch in porridge or soup: the kidneys' ember.*
Cherry	Hot	Sweet	Sweet-warm that tonifies	*A handful in season: the hot fruit that does not dry.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Raw vegetables, ice cream and cold drinks	Variable	Direct cold on the already low Ming Men: all hot during phase 4.
Salt	Warm	Reaches the Kidney but excess injures it, and it worsens oedema: hide the salt shaker.
Coffee	Warm	Borrows from the Ming Men energy it no longer has: fatigue comes back stronger.
Raw foods in the evening	Variable	The last meal should be warm: salad at noon, soup in the evening.

GOLDEN RULE

Warm without burning: hot flesh, Ming Men spices in a pinch, and nothing raw after noon.

MODERN NUTRITION

Vitamin D: its insufficiency is associated with cyclic symptoms in observational data, and it joins the bone fragility of the Yang-Kidney terrain. Complete proteins and fats in the morning support thermogenesis; salt is moderated for oedema.

6 Kidney and Liver Yin deficiency · *gān shèn yīn xū* 肝肾阴虚

The other renal side: when substance is lacking, cycle's end heats instead of cooling: hot flushes, insomnia, agitation, night sweats, tinnitus, dryness, early periods. Yin was meant to moisten and temper; it is parched. The strategy is dense-moistening: rebuild the fluid, do not heat.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Black Sesame	Neutral	Sweet	Fills the Jing, nourishes Yin	*Dry-roasted every morning: the seed that rebuilds Essence.*
Sesame oil	Cold	Sweet	Nourishes Yin and fluids	*As seasoning on warm dishes: the fat that moistens.*
Chicken egg	Neutral	Sweet	Nourishes Yin and Blood	*Soft-boiled in the evening: the runny yolk rebuilds Yin.*
Pork	Cool	Sweet, Salty	Nourishes Yin and fluids	*In a tender stew or soup: the fresh moistening meat.*
Duck (meat)	Cold	Sweet, Salty	Nourishes Yin of the five viscera	*In a long casserole or broth: Suixi Ju wants it with ham.*
Yam	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Tonifies Yin of the three burners	*In sweet soup: the tuber that moistens and anchors.*
Sheep's milk	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Nourishes Yin, dense	*Warm in the evening or as yoghurt: warm by nature but dense and Yin-nourishing.*
Oyster	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Nourishes Yin, calms the Shen	*Raw with lemon: the oyster that lays the deficiency fire.*
Mussel	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Nourishes Kidney Yin	*Marinière style: the pot that rebuilds without heating.*
Wheat	Cool	Sweet	Nourishes Yin, calms the Heart	*As wholemeal bread or semolina: the grain of the agitated Shen.*
Avocado	Cool	Sweet	Nourishes Yin and Blood	*Plain with salt: the fresh fat that moistens.*
Grape	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Nourishes Yin and Blood	*A fresh bunch: the sweet fruit that rebuilds fluids.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Coffee	Warm	Stirs the deficiency fire and damages already fragile sleep: nothing after noon.
Chilli and hot spices	Variable	Cinnamon and cloves, excellent in the Yang pattern, become the error here: all that heats burns Yin.
Grilled and dried foods	Variable	Dry cooking consumes fluids: steam, casserole, broth.

GOLDEN RULE

Moisten without weighing: dense and moistening rather than hot; substance is rebuilt gently.

MODERN NUTRITION

Magnesium: trials link it to nervousness and breast tension, the two cardinal signs here. Omega-3 for the inflammatory-mood axis; stimulants are banned after noon, sleep is Yin's first repairer.

7 Liver Blood stasis · *gān xuè yū* 肝血瘀

When stagnant Qi freezes Blood, pain becomes fixed and dark: precise pains, clots, localised painful PMS; the pattern often overlaps dysmenorrhoea. Blood was meant to flow; it has congealed. The strategy is sweet-pungent that circulates: neither cold that freezes nor hot that troubles.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Turmeric	Warm	Bitter, Pungent	Activates Liver Blood	*The daily pinch with pepper: the best-documented activator.*
Saffron	Neutral	Bitter	Nourishes and activates Blood, soothes	*Fifteen stigmas in the evening: the gold of circulation.*
Onion	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Pungent that moves Qi and Blood	*Cooked tender or raw in salad: the daily circulator.*
Basil (Aromatic)	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Moves Qi and Blood	*Chopped at the end of cooking: the aromatic that unblocks.*
Prawn	Warm	Sweet	Activates and tonifies Blood	*Pan-fried or in soup: warm and circulating.*
Vinegar	Warm	Sour, Sweet	Acid that leads Blood	*In vinaigrette or deglazing: the acid that sets moving.*
Adzuki	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Activates Blood, drains Dampness	*In a lightly sweetened soup or purée: the circulation bean.*
Peach	Hot	Sweet, Sour	Nourishes and activates Blood	*Pan-fried or roasted: the sweet-warm that makes flow.*
Eggplant, Aubergine	Cold	Sweet	Activates Blood, cool nature: long cooking	*As caviar or curry: always well cooked here.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Excess cold and iced foods	Variable	Cold congeals Blood: the ice cube in the glass works against you.
Heavy fats and sticky foods	Variable	Thick paste and congealed fat impede circulation.

GOLDEN RULE

Make flow without dispersing: gentle pungent and moderate warmth, never cold nor congealed fat.

MODERN NUTRITION

Omega-3 modulate the prostaglandins of cyclic pain; saffron still cumulates here the clinical trial and the classic action; table excesses worsen luteal-phase pains.

8 Cold-Dampness in the Spleen · *hán shī kùn pí* 寒湿困脾

When Dampness burdens the Spleen, the luteal phase swells: cyclic weight gain, heavy rather than painful breast tension, brain fog, mucus, general heaviness. The Spleen was meant to transform and drain; it founders under water. The strategy is warm draining: bring water down, warm the centre.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Oats	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tonifies the Spleen, drains	*As porridge in the morning: the grain that holds and descends.*
Barley	Warm	Sweet	Drains Dampness, tonifies the centre	*In soup or orzotto: the gentle diuretic grain.*
Job's Tears	Cool	Sweet	Yi yi ren drains Dampness through urine	*In congee or tea (hatomugi): the stagnant-water grain.*
Corn (silk and stigma)	Neutral	Sweet	Classic diuretic that brings water down	*As infusion: corn silk tisane, sweet and draining.*
Carp	Neutral	Sweet	Drains water, tonifies the centre	*In soup or braised: the Dampness fish.*
Green bean	Cold	Sweet	Drains Dampness	*French-style or in oil: the vegetable that brings water down.*
Celery	Cool	Sweet, Bitter	Drains and clarifies	*As morning juice or braised: the vegetable that unblocks.*
Daikon : Chinese Radish	Warm	Pungent, Sweet	Descends, drains	*Grated or braised: the congested-centre vegetable.*
Mandarin (peel)	Warm	Bitter, Pungent	Chen pi transforms Dampness	*A dried zest in soup: the Dampness classic.*
Fenugreek	Warm	Sweet, Bitter	Chases Cold-Dampness	*As ground seeds in mild curries: the warmer that transforms.*
Star Anise	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Warms and transforms Dampness	*One star in the broth: the draining perfume.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Sweet cold dairy products	Variable	The great Dampness generator: iced dairy and milk desserts to suspend in phase 4.
Sugars and pastries	Variable	Sugar feeds Phlegm, and the scale admits it in two days.
Fried foods and sticky fatty foods	Variable	Congealed fat impedes transformation and burdens the Spleen.
Salt	Warm	Sodium retention doubles MTC water retention: hide the salt shaker.

GOLDEN RULE

Drain while warming: bring water down through urine and warm the centre, never adding dampness.

MODERN NUTRITION

Reducing salt is the best-documented recommendation for oedematous PMS; vegetable potassium accompanies water exit; fast sugars stimulate insulin which retains sodium, the insulinic loop joins the Spleen's Dampness.

CROSS-CUTTING ADVICE

Valid whatever the pattern

Whatever the pattern, the luteal phase, the ten to fourteen days preceding the period, is the window of action: what plays out then repeats every cycle. The base below holds for all terrains.

- Strengthen the pattern's strategy from D15: the window of action is the luteal phase, not the period
- Reduce salt, caffeine and refined sugars for ten days: the common base for all patterns
- Saffron: the only spice with a direct clinical trial on PMS (30 mg/day, BJOG 2008), fifteen stigmas in infusion or cooking
- Daily dietary calcium (800 to 1000 mg): clinical trials used 1000 to 1200 mg supplements; the plate remains the base: fermented products, sardines, almonds, green vegetables
- Plate magnesium: nuts, green vegetables, oats; trials on premenstrual tension go through cooking
- Keep a cycle diary (mood, energy, pain, signs): the pattern reads over two cycles, not over one day
- Mixed PMS is the rule: patterns combine, prioritise the dominant one and adjust each month
- Intense fixed pain, haemorrhagic periods or marked distress: medical advice; this sheet does not replace diagnosis

IN THE KITCHEN

Adapted recipes

Daily, the basics

Traditional Scottish Porridge — Scotland

Warm oats at breakfast: the Spleen-Yang base of the luteal phase, to vary with sesame, jujubes or cinnamon depending on the pattern.

Mackerel in White Wine — France

The omega-3 oily fish with acidity that circulates: preferable to grilled salmon in phase 4.

Saffron-Braised Fennel — France

Fennel that circulates and saffron that nourishes Blood: the Liver pattern's dish par excellence.

Salade Niçoise — France

Anchovy + egg + vegetables: the complete lunch that nourishes without weighing, blanched vegetables if the Spleen is cold.

Moules Marinières — Belgium/France

The warm Yin-Essence pot: iron, zinc and Kidney Yin in a single dish; the Blood and Yin patterns find their place here.

Sardines à la Plancha, Tomato and Basil Salad — Portugal/Spain

Omega-3 + circulating basil + fresh tomato: the summer anti-PMS trio, light and warm.

Greek Chard (Spanakopita without pastry) — Greece

Spinach + egg + feta: the iron and protein of the Blood pattern, in a light version.

Quail Stuffed with Walnuts and Spinach — Iran/Middle East

Quail + walnut + spinach + cinnamon: the festive version of the Kidney-Yang pattern, hot and dense.

World, by pattern

Job's Tears Congee with Chicken and Ginger — China

The draining congee of tradition: yi yi ren descends water, ginger warms, the signature dish of the Dampness pattern.

Wakame Goma-ae Salad — Japan

Seaweed + sesame + vinegar: iodine and Kidney Yin, with the acidity that leads Blood.

Kumquat and Mint Feta Salad — Greece

Kumquat + mint: the two Liver circulators reunited, the light lunch of the Qi pattern.

Miso Soup with Wakame and Tofu — Japan

The Spleen ferment with the Yin seaweed: the morning soup that holds without weighing.

Jujube Tea (Daechu-cha) — China/Korea

Jujubes + ginger: the centre tisane that tonifies Spleen and Blood, the evening of phase 4.

Myeolchi Bokkeum — South Korea

Caramelised anchovies with sesame: calcium, omega-3 and Spleen in a single side dish.

Chicken, Black Garlic and Saffron Star Tagine — Morocco

Tonic chicken carried by saffron and black garlic: the slow-cooked dish of the Stasis and Liver patterns.

Asparagus and Lemon Orzotto — Italy

Draining barley in a gentle version: Dampness descends, lemon circulates.

PRACTICAL

Cooking & hygiene tips

1. The luteal phase begins around D15: that is where cooking changes, not at the period. Anticipating the window beats repairing the period: switch to porridge, soup and slow-cooking for about fifteen days a month.
2. Saffron in practice: fifteen stigmas infused fifteen minutes in warm water or milk, in the evening, never heated violently. It is the only spice with a direct clinical trial on PMS (30 mg/day).
3. The working zests: an untreated citrus zest in soup or tisane reproduces kitchen chen pi, circulating Qi without effort.
4. Roast seeds yourself: black sesame and seeds dry-toasted one minute before use; rancid oil loses its Yin action.
5. The phase-4 evening tisane: rose-jasmine-jujube (the Academy's universal tisane) for the mixed pattern, chamomile or verbena for fire, orange blossom for gentle tensions.
6. Hide the salt shaker: replace salt with circulating aromatics (fennel, coriander, zest, mild vinegar); you lose the reflex without losing the taste.
7. Gentle cooking in phase 4: steam, braise, casserole and broth rather than grill and fry; water works for the pattern, dry fire against it.

THROUGH THE YEAR

Seasonal advice

Spring

The Liver wakes with spring and Liver PMS worsens: green the plate, go out, breathe. Spring phase 4 asks for more circulators, mint, citrus, leaves.

Summer

Heat quickly turns stagnation into fire: hydrate, temper the grills and keep mint and verbena on the programme. The Fire and Yin patterns are the most vulnerable.

Autumn

Light fades and mood with it: sesame, oysters and broths rebuild the terrain before winter. November is the right time to install the strategy.

Winter

Yin is stored in winter: the Spleen-Kidney patterns find their season there, hot slow-cooking, seeds, roots, broths. Winter D15 goes through soup.

NOTES FOR THE PRACTITIONER

- This document is a dietary memory aid intended for health professionals. It supports dietary advice for PMS; it replaces neither clinical assessment nor medical advice.
- PMS vs premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD): major emotional distress, functional impairment or dark thoughts in the luteal phase require medical advice; this sheet supports common PMS.
- Vitex (agnus-castus) has its favourable meta-analysis (2019) but it is a medicinal plant, not a food: it falls under herbal medicine and the doctor, not the kitchen.
- PMS is the terrain's thermometer: its reduction over two to three cycles validates the strategy. PMS that resists invites a review of the pattern, or a search for a factor outside the plate.
- Ancient texts do not name 'PMS' but describe the signs of the menses (经行): irritability, breast distension, lower back, swollen belly, and attribute them to the Liver, Spleen and Kidneys. The dietary corpus prescribes rose, citrus and circulation for the Liver; hot soup and sweet seeds for the Spleen.
- The most frequent pattern in practice is the mixed Liver-Spleen: regulate stagnation in the first half of the phase (D15-D20), tonify afterwards (D21 to the period); the strategy follows the cycle's rhythm.

To go further: the “Integrative premenstrual syndrome: the MTC patterns”, “Menstrual cycle physiology in four phases”, and “Dietary prescriptions by gynaecological syndrome” courses at the Yin Shi Academy (formation.yinshi.app).

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Professional document to hand out or adapt in consultation.