



## Seed Cycling 101

# So, WTF is seed cycling?

## PHASE 1

### FOLLICULAR PHASE

The Follicular Phase takes place during days 1 and 14 of your cycle, during the New Moon (beginning on the first day of your period). With estrogen levels low during the start of the Follicular Phase, we cycle with flax seeds, which contain phytoestrogens (they adapt to the body's estrogen needs). When estrogen levels become too high for the body, lignan's from the flax seeds bind to the excess estrogen so it can be eliminated.

### Pumpkin Seeds

Pumpkin Seeds have zinc and magnesium as heavy hitters in it's tool box, along with many other compounds. This dual action fighter combats PMS and other annoyingly prevalent side affects of womanhood.

#### + Magnesium

The answer to all your PMS woes, Magnesium has been found to help alleviate those pesky PMS symptoms we all have come to hate, such as depression, anxiety, mood swings, bloating, low back pain, headache and breast pain/tenderness.

#### + Zinc

Zinc also works to reduce the severity of symptoms such as mood change, anxiety, weight gain, bloating and other PMS symptoms. During our luteal phase (phase 2), zinc levels drop significantly in women suffering from PMS. Therefore the replenishment of zinc is crucial in maintaining a balanced system.

## Flax Seeds

Flax seeds are a treasure trove of lignans, containing 70 to 80 times more than other lignan-rich foods. They work to remove excess hormones, reduce inflammation and aid in the reduction of painful PMS cramps.

Flax seeds are also rich in Magnesium, Zinc, Vitamin B1 and Omega-3 fatty acids.

### + Lignans

Lignans are phytonutrients found in a wide variety of foods, particularly flax seed. Our intestines convert lignan-rich foods into beneficial hormone-like compounds, aka phytoestrogens. Flaxseed contains 75 - 80 times more lignans than any other plant!

#### **Balancing Act**

During reproductive years, women's bodies contain a compound called oestrogen. Lignans act similarly to oestrogen, too, but they don't stimulate reproductive tissue. When our bodies overproduce oestrogen (such as during PMS), lignans compete with a woman's own oestrogen and regulate the quantity by keeping it in balance. For those facing menopause, oestrogen levels decline and lignans actually act in an opposite way, by increasing levels of oestrogen. This balancing action is due to lignans ability to competitively lock onto our estrogen reception sites. Therefore, lignans are effective in battling symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings and breast tenderness.

#### **Breast Cancer**

Lignans have also shown to have a protective effect against breast cancer. Patients who have supplemented with lignans (i.e. flaxseed) had a decreased tumor cell proliferation rate similar to the effects seen with certain breast cancer drugs. Lignans have been shown to reduce the growth of hormone-sensitive tumors by increasing the presence of Sex Hormone Binding Globulin (SHBG), which is a protein produced by the liver and is responsible for the metabolism and excretion of estrogen. Excess estrogen is the culprit for hormone-related diseases, such as PMS, weight gain and breast cancer. Thus, promotion of the metabolism and excretion of estrogen keeps it's levels in balance.

#### **PCOS**

and, in some cases, symptoms like acne and excess hair growth. Lignans have been found to reduce not only the number of ovarian cysts in women with PCOS, but the size of them as well. It has also been found that flaxseed supplementation has initiated menstruation in 33% of women that had previously faced irregular cycles.

### + Omega-3

Flaxseeds contain high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids (ALA) which our body converts into the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil (DHA and EPA.) This handy compound helps reduce inflammation and can reduce your risk of heart disease.

### + Vitamin B1 (Thiamine)

Our society relies too frequently on the quick fix. We treat inflammation or pain from periods with over the counter meds such as ibuprofen, aspirin or hormonal birth control. Vitamin B1 has been found to reduce the severity and duration of cramps and possibly even eliminate them completely. Some studies have found that 3 months of Vitamin B1 rid 87% of participants of menstrual cramps completely.

## PHASE 2

### LUTEAL PHASE

The Luteal Phase begins right after ovulation. A good rule of thumb is to assume this phase starts on Day 15 of your cycle, or if you're following the lunar calendar, the Full Moon. Phase 2 is initiated by a sudden drop in estrogen after ovulation takes place. The subsequent rise in progesterone works to build up the uterine lining and keep estrogen levels at bay. During the Luteal Phase, we balance with sesame seeds and sunflower seeds. Sesame Seeds contain zinc and selenium, which work to block excess estrogen, while sunflower seeds which are high in Vitamin E to support progesterone levels.

### Sesame Seeds

No Napoleon complex here, what these seeds lack in size, they certainly pack in punch. A powerful combination of Magnesium, Vitamin B1 and Zinc, they also contain other compounds such as Selenium and Vitamin B6. Sesame seeds have also been shown to modulate inflammation and support cholesterol metabolism. Given that sex hormones are made from cholesterol, any influx in inflammation can cause a response from the

both the follicular and luteal phase of a woman's cycle. While the concentration of lignans in sesame seeds is lower than that of flax seeds, they still perform integral functions. For Phase2, lignans inhibit estrogen levels from increasing too much.

### + Zinc

The zinc in sesame seeds is important for progesterone production, the star player in the Luteal Phase. Additionally, Zinc works to reduce the presence and severity of PMS symptoms such as mood changes, anxiety, weight issues, and bloating.

Zinc also helps to reduce inflammation and allows more oxygen to flow into the uterus. This helps to alleviate the affects of prostaglandins (responsible for inflammation) and reduce the presence and severity of menstrual cramps.

### + Selenium

Our body is so incredibly interconnected. When we are out of balance in one aspect, we are affected in another. This is particularly true when it comes to hormones. Selenium, a compound found in sesame seeds, is super important for optimal liver detoxification, which plays a major role in maintaining healthy hormone levels.

## Sunflower Seeds

Sunflower Seeds are complimentary to sesame seeds during the Luteal Phase of seed balancing. In addition to Iron and Magnesium, Sunflower Seeds also contain Vitamin E, which helps to boost progesterone levels and combat inflammation.

### + Vitamin E

Another compound to help reduce inflammation and ultimately reduce the severity and presence of menstrual cramps, Vitamin E works against hormones such as prostaglandins, which are responsible for cramping during painful periods.

### + Iron

Sunflower seeds contain nutrients such as iron, which support estrogen detoxification via CYP liver genes.

### + Magnesium

Most women have experienced menstrual cramps at some point and most of them don't realize that hormone-like substances called prostaglandins are the culprit. In the uterus,

don't realize that hormone-like substances called prostaglandins are the culprit. In the uterus, prostaglandins are what cause the muscles to contract each month so that you can release the lining of your uterus (aka, have a period.) The more inflammation = the worse the cramps (this can also be referred to as dysmenorrhea.)

Magnesium food in sunflower seeds supports healthy prostaglandin levels and can work to reduce those annoying and painful period cramps.

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