

- Women—health and hygiene

## What are the common health issues of women?

### Addressing women's needs through optimum nutrition and lifestyle change

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March is dedicated to all the women as the country celebrates National Women's Month. As we celebrate every woman who wears many hats daily, oftentimes to the detriment of their health, let us delve into the common health issues that women face.

#### Irregular periods, PCOS, and uterine fibroids

Estrogen dominance, or the excess production of the hormone estrogen relative to progesterone, causes the growth of myoma or uterine fibroid, formation of cysts in the ovaries, irregular menstrual periods that may be heavy or absent, also known as amenorrhea. Symptoms of PMS or premenstrual syndrome are also caused by estrogen dominance. Women who suffer from these conditions will benefit from a diet that is rich in fiber to regulate bowel movement. Excess estrogen is excreted through the stool. Therefore, a healthy bowel movement is a must. Furthermore, fiber in the diet, especially from soy, flaxseed, and white button mushrooms act as aromatase inhibitors. Aromatase is an enzyme that converts the hormone testosterone into estradiol, a form of estrogen. This is very important for women who have estrogen dominance. Other good sources of aromatase inhibitors are green tea, grape seed, citrus fruits, guava, berries, cherries, chia seeds, and dietary fiber from whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Thus, aim for at least two servings of fruits and three servings

of vegetables daily. Remember to drink water when eating high-fiber food to expand the fiber in the gut and prevent constipation.

As we celebrate National Women's Month, remember that your mind, body, and spirit as a woman need care and attention.

#### Anxiety and depression

Women are not mere emotional beings, contrary to what many stereotypically think. There are scientific reasons why anxiety and depression occur. One of which is a lack of sun exposure. Ten to 15 minutes a day of sun exposure helps boost the production of mood stabilizing hormone known as serotonin. Serotonin does not just work by regulating mood. It is also the precursor of the sleep hormone melatonin. Simply put, it helps in the production of sleep hormones. Poor sleep quality and inadequate sleep further aggravate symptoms of anxiety and depression. Another way to boost serotonin and other happy hormones is through exercise or being physically active. It may be challenging for someone struggling with depression to get up because fatigue and sluggishness are real during this difficult time. Anxiety can also be paralyzing.

Instead of aiming for a full workout that can easily get overwhelming just by thinking about it, why don't you try to get up from the bed or couch first? Begin by sitting straight for a few minutes, then slowly get up. Simply stand or pace for a few minutes. Five, 10, 15 minutes at a time. Intentionally repeat this several times a day. Set a soft alarm to remind you so you do not get startled. As you begin to get your blood circulation going, your stamina and endurance improve, and you will have more energy to engage in exercises. It is also important to be mindful of eating a wholesome, minimally processed, plant-predominant diet to support your physical activities, as well as your mental wellbeing. As we celebrate National Women's Month, remember that your mind, body, and spirit as a woman need care and attention. Not only for a whole month but every day, every year. Be mindful in taking care of yourself so you can also give more to the people you hold dear.

Happy Women's Month!