

# THAI MASSAGE TECHNIQUES

in Pregnancy, Labor & Postpartum

Treatment Protocols for Common  
Complaints and Discomforts



a Practitioners Guide

by Noam Tyroler

[www.thaiacu.com](http://www.thaiacu.com)

### What is a painful period?

- The 1st day of menstrual bleeding is the first day of the menstrual cycle (an average 28 days). 80% of women experience some symptoms prior to menstruation that will stop soon after the bleeding has started: acne, tender breasts, water retention, bloating, nausea, feeling tired, irritability, changes in sex drive and mood swings (mental tension, irritability, anxiety, crying spells, and depression). In 20% to 30% of women, these symptoms interfere with the normal life, therefore qualifying as "Premenstrual Syndrome". In 3% to 8% of woman, these symptoms are severe.
- The following protocol, treats one major Premenstrual Syndrome symptom - the menstrual cramps. About 50% of women experience painful cramps before and during the period with 15% describing the pain as severe. It's often described as burning pain, cramping pain, stabbing pain, pulling pain, bearing down pain in the lower back, hips, lower abdomen, groin, legs muscles (especially the inner thighs) or in the joints that may also be accompanied by muscular weakness, numbness, tingling of the limbs, tiredness, dizziness, insomnia, nausea, vomiting, sweating, headaches, diarrhea and possibly dark and clotted blood.
- Menstrual cramps are contractions of the womb (uterus) to shed the lining that was built up in the previous menstrual cycle which then passes through the cervix and out through the vaginal canal. The cramps last 1-4 days just before and at the beginning of the period that lasts between 2 - 7 days.
- Those suffering severe cramps may have to be the entire time under the influence of strong medicine and may not be able to work or function normally. In some woman, it's not so much the cramping but a severe headache.
- Primary Dysmenorrhea is the medical term for the common painful cramps. They usually become less painful as a woman ages and may stop entirely after the woman has her first baby. Secondary Dysmenorrhea is pain caused by a disorder in the woman's reproductive organs such as endometriosis, uterine fibroids, or pelvic inflammatory disease. These cramps usually begin earlier in the menstrual cycle and last longer than common menstrual cramps.

### Possible causes

- Menstrual cramps are caused by contractions of the uterus, which is a muscle, driven by the release of the hormone-like prostaglandin. If the uterus contracts strongly, it can press against nearby blood vessels, cutting off the supply of oxygen to the muscle tissue of the uterus. Pain results when part of a muscle briefly loses its supply of oxygen.
- Pain also has to do with the growing intrauterine pressure and decreased uterine blood flow. It can be seen as pain caused by stagnation in the uterine flow.
- Treatment in the form of a drug that inhibits the synthesis of prostaglandins, thus leading to decrease in intrauterine pressure has proven effective in relieving much of the menstrual cramps pain.
- Women who do not exercise, experience more painful menstrual cramps. Emotional stress may also be a factor in the intensity of the pain.
- Pains tend to be stronger in women with heavy bleeding during periods, in those under age 20, in those reaching puberty at age 11 or younger, in women who never gave birth and in those suffering from Secondary dysmenorrhea.

### TCM point of view

- The Liver (2nd inner leg line), Penetrating (Sen Sumana of the center of the body) and Directing (front body middle line) vessels are responsible for the physiology of menstruation. The relationship of blood flow and pains in women is very clear. For a normal period to occur blood must be abundant (rich with nutrients) and move adequately. Blood nourishes the muscles and tendons and joints and also flows in the channels. Stagnation of blood flow is the most important pathological condition causing painful period.
- Excessive work and Emotional strain are important factors in painful periods. Anger, resentment, and hatred may lead to liver Qi stagnation which causes blood to stagnate in the uterus leading to painful periods.
- A diet lacking proteins and Vitamins B and iron (vegetarianism or slimming diet) lead to deficient blood and Qi and period pains. An excessive consumption of dairy foods, sugar, sweets, raw-cold foods or greasy foods may lead to the formation of dampness that may settle in the channels and joints and lead to pain and swelling.
- Excessive exposure to cold, especially during puberty years, may cause cold to invade the uterus. Cold causes stasis of blood in the uterus and there for painful periods. Moving Qi and clearing stagnation in the penetrating channel is the most important.

### Some advice

Menstrual cramps due to Secondary Dysmenorrhea may require surgery or other strong medical intervention. Advice here is relevant to common pains – Primary Dysmenorrhea

- Quit smoking
- Limit your intake of alcohol, caffeine, salt, dairy foods, sugar, sweets, raw-cold foods or greasy food.
- See a Naturopathic Practitioner for dietary advice. Ask about a proteins and Vitamins B, iron, calcium and antioxidants rich diet: Lean meats and fish, eggs, beans, almonds and dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale, blueberries, cherries, and tomatoes, squash and bell pepper.
- See a Naturopathic Practitioner for dietary supplements and medicinal herbs advice and ask about vitamin E, Omega-3 fatty acids, Calcium Citrate, Vitamin D, and Magnesium. Ask about Chaste tree or Chaste berry, Crampbark, Black Cohosh, Evening Primrose Oil, Turmeric, Fennel, and Chamomile.
- Exercise regularly. Women who exercise regularly often have less menstrual pain. Make exercise a part of your weekly routine.
- Reduce stress. Practice Yoga and relaxation therapy. Rest and sleep more. Try Sex.
- Placing a heating pad or hot water bottle on the lower back or abdomen and taking a warm bath may help to some women.

Did you know? 97% of physicians say that continuous oral contraceptive therapy to suppress menstruation pain is medically safe.

### General instructions:

- It's a good idea to look at the menstrual cramps as a "Baby less childbirth". Many women say that labor pains are similar to menstrual cramps only much stronger.
- Treatment is a combination of "Pregnancy lower back pain" mixed with the labor inducing points and areas of the "In the birthing room" treatment protocol combined with a direct abdominal/uterine massage.
- Create a flow in the uterus and in the center axis of the body using twists, flexions, and extensions of the torso.
- Stretch the front torso middle line and flex the spine. Focus on movement and stretches of the lower back and hip. Stretch the hip joints and the legs, especially the inner legs. Use the inverted poses.
- Work the lines and points to encourage blood circulation, clear stagnation and create a downward flow.
- Insist on abdominal massage towards the end of the treatment session even if for some women it will be very painful.

*Continued on the the next page ►*

**PRONE POSITION**

1. Palm press from the feet to the neck, up and down many times

Work from the foot up to the hip, continue up to her neck, down and up the inner arms and up and down the outer arms, back down to the hip and the feet. Repeat 2-3 times.



Steps 5-10, P.48

2. Work her 3 back lines and focus on the lower back, buttocks, sacrum and coxycs.

You can use palm, thumb, elbow and knee techniques to work as deep as she can take. Some women like strong tapping on the sacrum.

**Work softer if your pressure creates a lower back pain.**

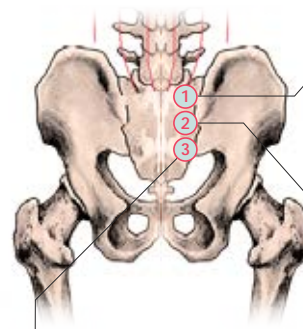


Steps 5-10, P.48

3. Press points 1-3

Use double thumb technique to press and massage these points. Focus on the point that is most painful or most “hungry” for pressure. If your thumb gets tired and she needs more pressure you can use your elbow or climb on her to use your heels.

**Only if you are not too heavy for her!**



**BL-31**  
Over the first posterior sacral foramen. Find a depression below the 5th lumbar spinous process, Medial to the posterior superior iliac spine (PSIS / dimples) prominence

**BL-32**  
Over the second posterior sacral foramen. Find a depression medial and below the posterior superior iliac spine (PSIS / dimples) prominence, 1/3 of the way from the PSIS to the buttocks crease (sacro-coccygeal hiatus)

**BL-33**  
Over the third posterior sacral foramen. Find a depression 1 finger width below the posterior superior iliac spine (PSIS / dimples) prominence

4. Use your feet for a deep sacrum and lower back massage.

This step can prove the most effective of steps. When your thumb or elbow pressure is not deep enough for her and depending on your weight and the structure and body tonus of your client, she may need you to stand and walk on her back and sacrum. She may appreciate strong heels massage of the sacrum, sacroiliac joints and lower back.

**Skip this step if you are not experienced with such strong massage technique and not sure if the client is strong enough for your weight.**

5. Use all the stretches in p.40 to 48

**Stop any stretch that creates a lower back pain.**





Steps 5-10, P.48



## SIDE POSITION

### 6. Palm press her inner leg and thumb press the inner lines

Use your body weight as you start at the foot, work up to the groin and back down. Use your palm if thumb pressure is too sharp for her. Work as deep as she can take and want. Repeat 1-3 times.



Steps 5-10, P.48



### 7. Work points 4 to 7

Press between 5-15 seconds. Release pressure. Repeat 1-3 times. Very deep pressure is good if that suits your client.



**Outer foot-5 (LIV-3)**  
a sensitive point between the first and second toes, in the depression 2 fingers back from the web • 2 fingers anterior to the junction between the 1st and 2nd metatarsal bones

**Leg 2nd inner line-1 (KID-3)**  
between the medial malleolus and the Achilles tendon, level with the malleolus • press toward the malleolus for a sprained ankle and toward the Achilles tendon for a stiff Achilles



**Inner foot-2 (KID-6)**  
directly below the medial malleolus • find a thin depression between the inferior border of the malleolus and the talus



**Leg 1st inner line-1 (SP-6)**  
3 fingers above the prominence of the medial malleolus • adjacent to the medial border of the tibia

### 8. Work the outer leg lines

Begin at the foot and work up to her hip and back down. Repeat 1-3 times.



Steps 5-10, P.48



### 9. Press point 8

Press between 5-15 seconds. Release pressure. Repeat 1-3 times. Very deep pressure is good if that suits your client.



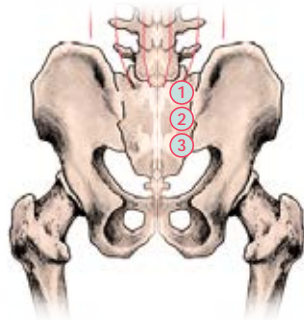
**2nd outer line side position-1 (UB-60)**  
In a depression on the posterior border of the malleolus • press toward the malleolus

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**10.** Massage again her lower back, buttocks, sacrum and coxycs and press points 1-3

Use palm, thumb and elbow techniques to work as deep as she can take. Some women like strong tapping on the sacrum.

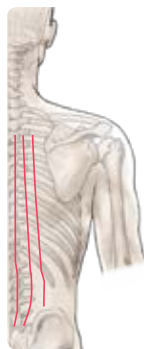
**Skip this step if she has had enough and the hip, sacrum and lower back areas have become sensitive.**



Steps 5-10, P.48

**11.** Work the 3 back lines

Use the as much pressure as she can take.



Steps 5-10, P.48

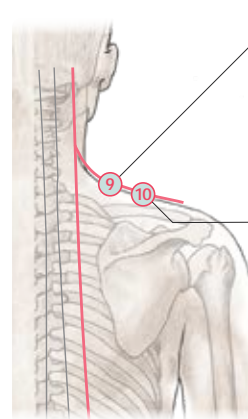
**12.** Work the top of the trapezius, neck, base of skull and head



Steps 5-10, P.48

**13.** Press points 9 and 10

Press between 5-15 seconds. Release pressure. Repeat 1-3 times. Very deep pressure is good if that suits your client.



3rd back-5  
on the top edge of the trapezius  
• level with the medial border of the scapula • a stiff and tender point, press downwards cautiously

3rd back-6 (GB-21)  
on the top edge of the trapezius, 1/2-way from the median line to the acromion • directly above Scapula-1 • a stiff and tender point, press downwards cautiously

**14.** Try these stretches



Steps 5-10, P.48

**SUPINE POSITION**

**15.** Give her a foot massage and work points 4 to 7

Press between 5-15 seconds. Release pressure. Repeat 1-3 times. Very deep pressure is good if that suits your client.

Steps 5-10, P.48



Outer foot-5 (LIV-3)  
a sensitive point between the first and second toes, in the depression 2 fingers back from the web • 2 fingers anterior to the junction between the 1st and 2nd metatarsal bones

Leg 2nd inner line-1 (KID-3) between the medial malleolus and the Achilles tendon, level with the malleolus • press toward the malleolus for a sprained ankle and toward the Achilles tendon for a stiff Achilles



Inner foot-2 (KID-6) directly below the medial malleolus • find a thin depression between the inferior border of the malleolus and the talus



Leg 1st inner line-1 (SP-6) 3 fingers above the prominence of the medial malleolus • adjacent to the medial border of the tibia

**16. Palm press the inner leg and thumb press the inner leg lines**

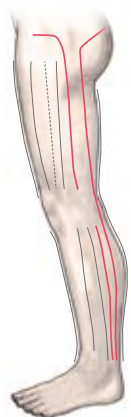
Start at the knee, work up to the groin and back down. Repeat 1-3 times. Use your palm if thumb pressure is too sharp for her.



Steps 5-10, P.48

**17. Palm press and thumb press the outer leg lines**

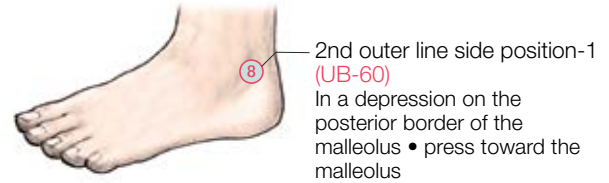
Start at the foot, work up to the hip and back down. Repeat 1-3 times.



Steps 5-10, P.48

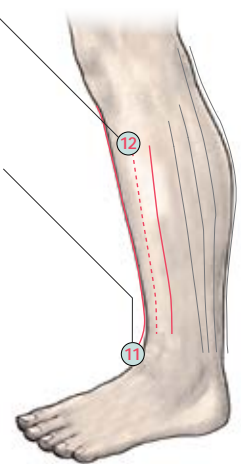
**18. Press points 8, 11 and 12**

Press between 5-15 seconds. Release pressure. Repeat 1-3 times. Very deep pressure is good if that suits your client.



Leg 2nd outer line-3 (ST-36) 4 fingers below the lower border of the patella • on the tibialis anterior muscle, about 1 finger lateral to the tibia crest • radiates to the foot

Leg 1st outer line-1 (ST-41) in a depression at the junction of the dorsum of the foot and the leg • between the two tendons extensor hallucis longus and extensor digitorum longus • at the level of the lateral malleolus



**19. Try all the leg stretches**

Work all the leg stretches.



Steps 5-10, P.48

Continued on the the next page ►

**20.** Try these twists



Steps 5-10, P.48

**21.** Try a deep abdominal massage

The abdomen is often very sensitive and abdominal massage may be a torture for her but this is often the most important part of your treatment. Encourage her to tolerate the pain.

A lot of pains during abdominal massage mean substantial relief right after. Use all the techniques that you are familiar with or follow the instructions. Give a lot of time to the most painful parts of the abdomen. Work softly and superficially for a while but then make it deeper.



Steps 5-10, P.48

**22.** Try this stretch

**Stop if this stretch creates a lower back pain.**

Steps 5-10, P.48



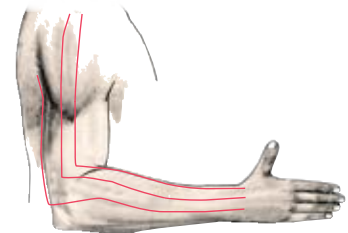
**23.** Palm press the inner arm and thumb press the 3 inner lines

Begin at the hand and work up to the shoulder and back down.



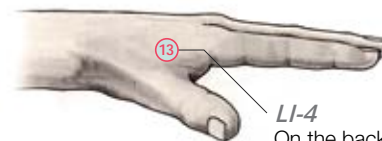
**24.** Palm press the outer arm and thumb press the 3 outer lines

Begin at the hand and work up to the shoulder and back down.



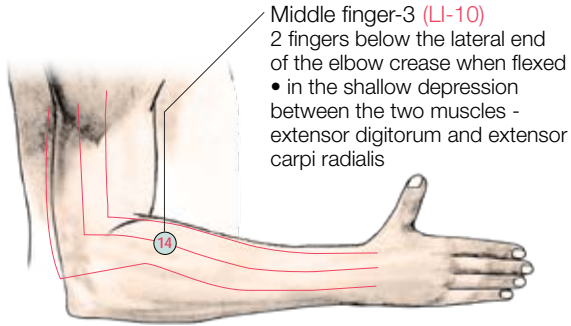
**25.** Press points I3 and I4

Press between 5-15 seconds. Release pressure. Repeat 1-3 times. Use the amount of pressure that suits your client.



**I4**  
On the back of the hand, on the fleshy muscle between the thumb and index (between the 1st and 2nd metacarpal bones)





Middle finger-3 (LI-10)  
 2 fingers below the lateral end  
 of the elbow crease when flexed  
 • in the shallow depression  
 between the two muscles -  
 extensor digitorum and extensor  
 carpi radialis

**26.** Use all techniques and stretches  
 in Steps 5-10, P. 48

Stop any stretch that creates a lower back pain. There is a common opinion against inversions during menstruation. Inversions, however are used in Yoga Therapy for the treatment of different menstruation disorders. Unlike Yoga practice where headstand or shoulder stand (as examples) are held for a minute or more, in Thai massage it's never longer than a few seconds at a time. As long as your client feels comfortable and enjoy inversions, you can and should use them.

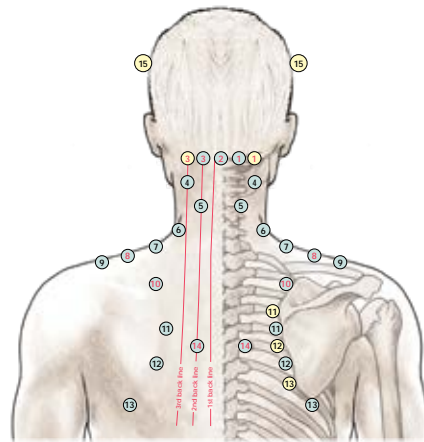


## SITTING POSITION

**27.** Use the stretches and techniques of the entire sitting position. Steps 5-10, P. 48



**28.** For a period headache use all the points of routine 3 in the book Thai Acupuncture



## SUPINE POSITION

**29.** Give her a neck and head massage allowing / encouraging her to fall asleep

Insist on a long head massage if she is having a period headache.

