

CASE REPORT

UDC: 618.17-008.8-085.814.1

Acupuncture treatment for irregular menstrual cycle

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Article received: 17 Dec. 2025

Article revised: 24 Dec. 2025

Article accepted: 30 Dec. 2025

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.59710/oaijoaru264129za>

Abstract

The menstrual cycle is a natural cycle of changes that a woman's body goes through every month. Menstruation usually occurs every 28 to 30 days and lasts from 3 to 7 days. The average cycle length is about 29 days. Irregular periods can happen for many reasons, from everyday stress to certain underlying health conditions. Irregular periods can include cycles that are shorter than 21 days or longer than 35 days, skipping three or more periods consecutively, or having menstrual bleeding that is noticeably heavier or lighter than normal. In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), irregular menstruation is often attributed to insufficient blood generation, which stems from depleted blood and essence that leave the body weakened. Acupuncture as a part of TCM can help to restore a regular period in women who have irregular periods or when the period is absent (amenorrhea). In this research is presented a case of a 37-year-old woman with irregular menstrual cycle, she has had this health problem since she was a girl when she first got her period. She came to the acupuncture center in August 2025, the treatments were done once a week. After 14 treatments, i.e. at the end of October, the patient got her period which lasted 5 days. After the cycle she continued with the treatments also once a week until the next cycle which occurred at the beginning of December. Before starting acupuncture treatments, she used 4 months of hormonal therapy, Cyclo Prognova. Last year, the patient did not miss a period for 12 months. The patient also has polycystic ovarian syndrome. Acupuncture can be highly beneficial for preventing problems and for managing conditions that are more serious or advanced.

Key words: Menstrual cycle, acupuncture, TCM

Introduction

During the reproductive stage of a woman's life, the menstrual cycle follows a rhythmic pattern of events. It generally starts at approximately 12 to 15 years old, marking puberty, and ends around 45 to 50 years old with menopause. The cycle is often about 28 days long, though normal cycles may fall anywhere between 21 and 35 days. Depending on a woman's age, occupation, and country of residence, the occurrence of irregular menstrual cycles can range from 5% to 35.6%.

Menstrual irregularities are defined as follows:

- **Secondary amenorrhea:** absence of menstruation for more than 6 months in a non-pregnant woman.
- **Oligomenorrhea:** menstrual cycles that occur at intervals longer than 35 days.
- **Polymenorrhea:** menstrual cycles occurring at intervals shorter than 21 days, often with heavy bleeding (>5 fully soaked pads per day).
- **Hypomenorrhea:** menstrual periods lasting less than 2 days, with very light bleeding (<1 pad per day).
- **Menorrhagia:** menstrual periods lasting more than 8 days and/or accompanied by heavy bleeding (>5 fully soaked pads per day).
- **Dysmenorrhea:** painful menstruation, typically presenting as spasmodic lower abdominal pain during the first 2 days of the cycle, sometimes radiating to the legs.

Menstrual irregularities may involve spotting or bleeding between periods, bleeding after intercourse, cycle lengths that shift by more than 7-9 days, or the absence of menstruation for 3-6 months. These disturbances often arise from fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone levels, which disrupt the cycle's usual rhythm. Frequent underlying causes include polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), hormonal contraceptives, breastfeeding, intense physical activity, intrauterine devices, and thyroid disorders such as hyperthyroidism or hypothyroidism. Factors that can be modified such as obesity, smoking, and stress also contribute to irregular cycles. [1]

Irregular or prolonged menstrual cycles often resulting from disturbances in the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis are common in women of reproductive age. These patterns have been linked to an increased risk of various non-communicable diseases, such as ovarian cancer, coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes mellitus (DM), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), mental health problems and metabolic syndrome. [2]

Case Report

In this research is presented a case of a 37-year-old woman with irregular menstrual cycle, she has had this health problem since she was a girl when she first got her period. She came to the acupuncture center in August 2025, the treatments were done once a week. After 14 treatments, i.e. at the end of October, the patient got her period which lasted 5 days. After the cycle she continued with the treatments once a week until the next cycle which occurred at the beginning of December. Before starting acupuncture treatments, she used 4 months of hormonal therapy, Cyclo Prognova. Last year, the patient did not miss a period for 12 months. The patient also has polycystic ovarian syndrome. During acupuncture treatments, it was also used an infrared lamp in the lower abdomen.

The acupuncture treatments were made in an acupuncture clinic for acupuncture and TCM in Skopje, North Macedonia by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. Acupuncture treatments were with a duration of 30 to 45 minutes. Treatments were done indoors, on a room temperature, with normal (dry) acupuncture with fine sterile disposable needles sized 0.25x25mm. Acupuncture points used in the treatments are: DU20, LI4, ST 29, KI11, ST36, SP6, LI3.

According to the *Huangdi Neijing*, around the age of fourteen the innate Kidney essence becomes abundant, allowing the Ren channel to open and the Chong channel to flourish, which leads to the onset of menstruation. The Spleen is essential for generating blood, while the Liver regulates and balances both Qi and blood throughout the body's

meridians. It also links these functions with the Chong and Ren channels in the lower abdomen.

From a TCM viewpoint, the menstrual cycle can be divided into four stages. *Menstrual phase*: Qi and blood move downward to discharge the old blood, making way for the formation of fresh blood. *Post-menstrual phase*: The body needs to rebuild blood and essence, which is supported by reinforcing Kidney energy and improving the digestive system. *Ovulation phase*: Kidney vitality rises, helping stimulate the ovaries and trigger ovulation. *Pre-menstrual phase*: Kidney Yang increases to support the potential implantation of a fertilized egg. In recent years, acupuncture has been increasingly applied to address various gynecological conditions. By selecting and manipulating specific acupoints, acupuncture can help restore normal menstrual rhythms. Contemporary research also shows that stimulation of certain points can influence the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, support follicular development and secretion, and ultimately enhance sex hormone regulation. It also reduces stress, increases circulation in the pelvic area and thicken the endometrium to improve menstrual cycle. [3,4]

Conclusion

Acupuncture treatment as part of TCM, is used to treat variety of diagnoses, to reduce pain, to enhance the natural healing process in the human body, and in women to help regulate reproductive problems. Acupuncture works to rebalance the body, which can ease various symptoms and support overall well-being.

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Conflict of interest

The author have declared that no competing interests exist.

Acknowledgement

None.

Statement of Informed Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from the patient for his anonymized Information to be published in this article