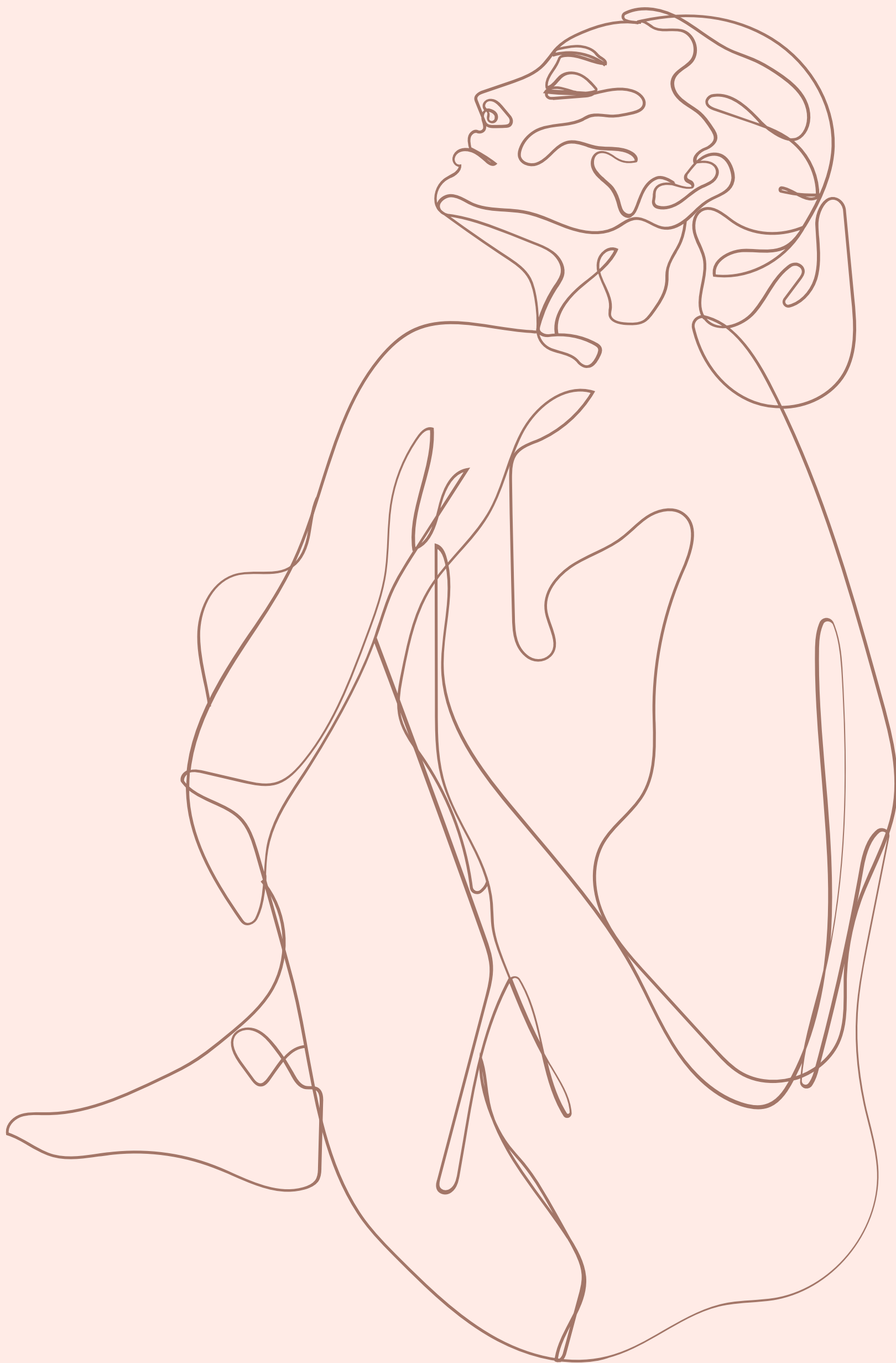


# Hack your Hormones!

A simple guide to cycle - syncing

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# Foreword...

The use of “woman” and “women” and she/her pronouns throughout this e-book are used for ease of writing.

The information provided may be applied to any person, born with female physiology, regardless of their gender identity.

If you identify as non-binary, were born with male anatomy though identify as female or are currently transitioning to identify as female, connecting to the following information and to this infradian rhythm and the cyclical nature of feminine energy may also help to support your transition and relationship to your feminine energy.

The following information is to be used as a guide only and is intended to educate women to achieve better cycles, naturally. This resource is not to be used in place of medical advice or treatments.

Please seek adequate medical treatment where appropriate.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us here at Womb to World to put you in contact with our wonderful registered acupuncturists and Chinese medicine practitioners.

# What is cycle - syncing?

Cycle - syncing is living, eating, exercising and expending energy according to your infradian rhythm.

The infradian rhythm refers to the hormonal fluctuations women experience throughout the 4 phases of the menstrual cycle - the follicular phase, ovulation phase, luteal phase and of course the menstrual phase.

This infradian rhythm influences several systems including the reproductive system, metabolism, microbiome, brain, nervous system and immune system.

Each of these phases go through various hormonal changes and when not eating, exercising or living well, according to the particular phase that you are in, symptoms including but not limited to PMS, breast tenderness, irregular or absent periods and heavy and painful bleeding can arise.

When eating, exercising, taking rest and living according to your infradian rhythm, you can thrive and periods can come and go with ease.

In this simple guide, you will learn about the 4 phases of your cycle and how best to live, eat and work well!

# Getting to know the 4 phases...

The follicular phase - this phase should last between 7-10 days in a regular, healthy cycle. This phase occurs just after your bleed and extends up until ovulation. Your hypothalamus sends a signal to your pituitary gland to start secreting follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) to the ovaries. FSH basically lets the ovaries know that it is time to get ready to release an egg for potential fertilisation. Several of your follicles will start to grow in size while oestrogen levels rise, leading to the thickening of your uterine lining. There will be little to no cervical mucus at first but as this phase progresses you may notice a white discharge with a sticky or tacky texture.



The ovulation phase begins after the follicular phase and lasts 3-4 days - this is often referred to as your 'fertile window'. FUN FACT: Not everyone ovulates on day 14 of their menstrual cycle. During this phase FSH rises and the pituitary gland increases the secretion of luteinizing hormone (LH). This causes further stimulation of one of the follicles and the release of an egg into the fallopian tubes. This egg then travels to the uterus while oestrogen levels continue to rise and the uterus lining continues to thicken. Testosterone takes a surge and drops again around ovulation. Cervical mucus increases and may appear clear, slippery and stretchy not unlike an egg white.

# Getting to know the 4 phases...

The luteal phase occurs after ovulation and extends up until your bleed (if you have not fallen pregnant). In a healthy, regular cycle this phase can last around 10-14 days. The corpus luteum (the follicle which housed the egg) grows on the surface of the ovary causing it to produce progesterone. The rise of progesterone tells the body to stop secreting FSH and LH, ensuring that only one egg has been released to the uterus. Oestrogen continues to rise. The corpus luteum is then re-absorbed by the body (providing the egg has not been fertilised and no pregnancy has occurred). Progesterone production stops and testosterone begins to increase once again. Little to no cervical mucus is detected at this stage



The menstrual phase begins as progesterone drops and the corpus luteum is re-absorbed. This triggers the shedding of the uterine lining - triggering your period. A healthy period can last between 3 and 7 days. Oestrogen peaks and then drops again, signalling to the hypothalamus to begin another cycle and prepare once again for ovulation. Brown spotting may occur followed by your bleed.



# The Follicular phase

## ENERGY

Women experience an increase in physical energy during this phase. Focus your energy on stimulating and creative endeavours in your work or home. This is the week to problem solve and complete tasks that are particularly challenging mentally. In this phase you may feel more outgoing, open-minded and upbeat. This week is a great time to schedule social engagements and try something new as your energy rises. In Chinese medicine this is the phase that relates to Yin.

Yin is fluid, flowing and feminine. Allow yourself time to embody this energy. In Chinese medicine we are always striving to find the balance between Yin and Yang. As Yin is predominant in this phase it is a good idea to incorporate more yang or warming types of foods and movement.

## MOVE

As your energy is higher in this phase and the metabolism naturally slows down exercises which ramp up metabolism and increase yang are especially helpful. Think cardio or high intensity interval training if your energy allows. This is also a great time to change up your workout routine and try something new! Try a new class or take a different route on your walk or run. Try a new hiking trail or take up something fun that you've always wanted to do!

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# The Follicular phase

## EAT

In this phase, women can thrive best on light, fresh, vibrant fruits and vegetables, as well as quality proteins, fats and grains. In Chinese medicine it is a time to nourish Yin, blood and the Liver energy. The Liver in Chinese medicine belongs to the Wood element and the preferred colour is green and flavour is sour. Incorporating green vegetables and sour flavours can help tonify the Liver energy and build the blood! Incorporating red/purple foods such as beetroot, cabbage and berries can also benefit the production of blood from a Chinese medicine perspective. If you consume animal products, this is a great time to incorporate bone broths. As the metabolism naturally slows in this phase, consuming a balance of warm, cooked, Yang type foods can also help to aid digestion.

Here are some example foods that can be helpful throughout this phase.

Grains- Barley, oat, rye, wheat

Vegetables - Broccoli, carrot, parsley, green peas, green beans, zucchini

Fruits - Avocado, grapefruit, lemon, lime, orange, plum, pomegranate, sour cherry

Legumes - Green lentil, lima bean, mung bean, split pea

Nuts - Brazil, cashew, lychee

Animal protein - Chicken, eggs

# The ovulation phase

## ENERGY

Energy remains high throughout the ovulation phase and most women experience increased vitality as this is when we are most fertile. You might experience more confidence during this phase and studies suggest that women often take extra effort during this phase to look and feel good in order to attract a sexual partner. With this increase in energy, vitality and confidence, this is a great time to start tackling life's problems. Women are better communicators in this phase so hold off on the serious discussions and conversation topics until this week if possible. You'll also be more receptive to other's feelings during this phase and it makes a great time for connecting with others. In Chinese medicine we see an increase in the body's Yang energy throughout this phase. Yang is the driving force that initiates the release of the egg so continuing to move and eat in a way that nourishes Yang is important.

## MOVE

As your energy is still at its peak in this phase, continue to incorporate some more high intensity, Yang type movement to your work out routine such as swimming, cycling or running. The metabolism naturally slows down in this phase and so exercises that warm the body up and build Yang can help to keep things moving. As testosterone also takes a surge in this stage, weight lifting can also be a beneficial exercise during this time. As connection feels so natural during the ovulation phase, think about joining an exercise class or inviting your friends to exercise with you!

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# The ovulation phase

## EAT

As your energy is naturally more abundant in this phase you can thrive on less carbohydrates in this phase and opt for lighter grains such as oats or quinoa. Be sure to include lots of fibre into your diet at this time to help eliminate excess oestrogen and aid metabolism. As our metabolism naturally slows down in this phase it's a great time to incorporate more warm, cooked and easily digestible foods to our diet to keep things moving as they are supposed to and to help nourish the body's Yang energy. This is a great time to get out the slow cooker!

Here are some example foods that can be helpful throughout this phase.

Grains- Amaranth, corn, quinoa

Vegetables - Asparagus, Brussel sprouts, capsicum, eggplant, spinach, tomato

Fruits - Apricot, coconut, figs, guava, raspberry, strawberry

Legumes - Red lentils

Nuts - Almond, pecan, pistachio

Animal protein - Lamb

# The Luteal phase



## ENERGY

Physical energy is beginning to decline in the luteal phase and some women may start to experience premenstrual symptoms in this week such as irritability, headaches, cravings, bloating and mood swings. This is a time to prioritise comfort. Many women feel the sudden desire to nest at this time, if there was ever a time to catch up on the house work or clear out your inbox, this is it. You might notice things that you didn't notice before and feel driven to accomplish those tasks that you have been procrastinating. You might need your space this week and prefer to focus inward and on self care than to tackle social engagements. Spend some time in nature, take a bath or get around to reading that book you've been meaning to finish. Relax and enjoy your solitude! In Chinese medicine this phase is all about Qi! When not living well in accordance to your infradian rhythm, the body's Qi can begin to stagnate, in particular the Liver Qi. When Liver Qi stagnation occurs we see premenstrual symptoms crop up so this is a great time to pay special attention to nourishing your Liver and to gently move that stagnant Qi.

## MOVE

Start to move your body in gentler ways now that your energy is taking a dive. Opt for low-impact activities like yin-yoga, qi gong or tai chi. Slapping qi gong is a great exercise if you are experiencing symptoms of pre-menstrual tension. Take a solitary walk in nature and take rest when you need.

# The Luteal phase

## EAT

As your energy begins to decrease in this phase and you may be experiencing premenstrual symptoms, it is important to focus on getting enough fibre and nutrient dense foods, particularly those rich in B-vitamins, magnesium and calcium. It is common for women to experience sugar cravings in this phase so try to opt for natural sugars from fruit instead to help balance blood sugar and reduce inflammation keeping mood swings and PMS at bay. Making sure that you are getting enough fibre will help continue to flush out that excess oestrogen during this phase. Orange root vegetables are particularly tonifying for the Spleen Qi in Chinese medicine and green veggies help to move any stagnant Liver Qi so incorporate these foods to help boost energy and keep the energy moving smoothly.

Here are some example foods that can be helpful throughout this phase.

Grains - Brown rice, millet

Vegetables - Cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, garlic, ginger, leek, onion, parsnip, pumpkin, sweet potato

Fruits - Apples, dates, peach, pear, raisins

Legumes - Chickpeas

Nuts - Pine nuts, walnuts

Meat - Beef, turkey

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# The Menstrual phase



In the menstrual phase, energy continues to decrease. This is a time of rest, intuition and introspection. You might find yourself ruminating on which direction to take next. Many women feel restless this week and these feelings are the stimulus to re-evaluate how you are doing things. In this phase it is common for women to experience clear and intuitive gut feelings and so it is especially important to listen to these messages. Listen to your body and trust your instincts. This phase in Chinese medicine is all about blood (of course). Be mindful of moving and eating in a way that preserves your energy and nourishes the blood.

## MOVE

This week it is best to prioritize rest and recovery, especially in the first day or two of your bleed. Take it easy, practice some gentle yoga or go for a walk in nature. As you come into the follicular phase once again you'll be able to add more intensive workouts so for now listen to your body and move intuitively.

# The Menstrual phase

## EAT

Continue to focus your diet on including nutrient dense foods while you are bleeding and keep hydrated. Mineral rich seafood and seaweed can help to re-mineralize your body with the zinc and iron that is lost during your bleed as well as helping to nourish the Kidney energy in Chinese medicine - an important factor of this phase. Fruits and vegetables high in water content are also important as well as blood building vegetables that are red or purple in colour to help build and tonify blood. You might lean towards comfort foods like stews, soups and broths in this phase which are deeply nourishing to the kidneys and blood, particularly while you are bleeding.

Here are some example foods that can be helpful throughout this phase.

Grains - Buckwheat, wild rice

Vegetables - Beetroot, kale, kelp, mushrooms, seaweed

Fruits - Blackberry, blueberry, cranberry, grapes, watermelon

Legumes - Adzuki, black beans, kidney beans

Nuts - Chestnut

Meat - Fish, duck, pork



# Basal Body Temperature

Tracking your basal body temperature on a chart throughout your cycle can help you more accurately identify when you are ovulating and indicate the best time to have intercourse if trying to conceive (or not have intercourse if not).

Our temperature rises just after ovulation has occurred as our progesterone starts to rise. So when you see this peak in temperature, you'll be able to determine which days you are most fertile.

And as a bonus, tracking your basal body temperature is easy, accurate and inexpensive!

Here's how to get to tracking!

1. Get a thermometer with 2 decimal places
2. Take temperature first thing in the morning, before you get out of bed (leave your thermometer, chart/app and pen on the bedside table so you don't forget)
3. Take your temperature at the same time every morning!
4. Take it in the same way each day (mouth, underarm, vagina - pick which is easiest and most comfortable and don't change it up)
5. Mark down your results on your chart or app.

# Seed Cycling

If you haven't already heard of seed cycling it is but another way to help regulate the health and vitality of your cycle!

Hormones need certain nutrients, minerals and essential fatty-acids for both production and functionality so including seed-cycling can be a great way to help heal any hormone irregularities that may be occurring along side cycle-syncing.

Take a tablespoon each of the seeds daily during their corresponding phase. You can add the ground seeds into your meals, add to your muesli or sprinkle atop your avocado toast!

## Menstrual and Follicular Phases

Flaxseeds are high in Omega-3 fatty acids and phyto-oestrogens which help to reduce inflammation and modulate oestrogen activity. This can help to alleviate menstrual cramps and regulate symptoms of oestrogen dominance or deficiency.

Pumpkin seeds are high in zinc and fatty-acids that help to regulate the secretion of progesterone and regulate the level of androgens such as testosterone.

## Ovulation and Luteal Phases

Sesame seeds are rich in minerals such as selenium, calcium, zinc and magnesium and are helpful in the regulation of hormones, assisting with oestrogen metabolism and symptoms of PMT

Sunflower seeds are also mineral-rich and can help to further alleviate premenstrual symptoms

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