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## **Premenstrual syndrome and the use of alternative therapies.**

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Premenstrual syndrome is a collection of symptoms that may be encountered by up to 95% of the population, although it is estimated to affect 5% of women severely. The use of complementary and alternative therapies is high among this group, but does not seem to compromise conventional treatment. It has been established that complementary therapies are used by a large proportion of the developed world, but their efficacy and safety are not always proven. This is partly due to the difficulty of studying alternative practices and the cost, but also with respect to premenstrual syndrome, problems with defining the condition and specifying end points are encountered. The difficulties in evaluating unorthodox therapies are elucidated and the evidence base for nonprescribed treatments for premenstrual syndrome is presented. Overall these women are a neglected group for whom the evidence for conventional therapy is sparse and controversial. Since the majority of women self-diagnose and self-medicate, it is important that physicians have an understanding of the variety of interventions tried and their worth.