



YOUR GUIDE TO SEED CYCLING FOR HORMONE BALANCE

ONE

INTRODUCTION



Seed cycling is a simple, yet can be a powerful addition to any hormone balancing journey.

This guide will walk you through what seed cycling is, why it's helpful for menstrual health and how to incorporate seed cycling into your routine.

WHAT IS SEED CYCLING?

Seed cycling is a technique that, in addition to diet, lifestyle and supplement changes can naturally help your body regulate its sex hormone levels (oestrogen and progesterone) by alternating different seeds during the two phases of your menstrual cycle. This technique is safe to do at any time.

There's a lack of clinical research specifically on the seed cycling technique but there's lots of research on the nutrients such as lignans, zinc and magnesium (linked below) that are in the seeds that are thought to be the driving factors behind the positive impact on the menstrual cycle - alongside a huge amount of anecdotal evidence from women who swear by the technique. The bottom line is that, seeds are so nutrient dense that at the very least, they're a fantastic addition to anyone's diet!

HOW IS IT HELPFUL?

If we take a look at what happens during the menstrual cycle, it's easier to see how seed cycling fits into the larger picture of overall health and hormone balance.

Oestrogen and progesterone are two of the key hormones that fluctuate over the course of the menstrual cycle. Oestrogen levels rise during the first half of the cycle (the Follicular phase, aka phase 1) and progesterone levels rise during the second half of your cycle (the Luteal phase, aka phase 2).

These two hormones can become imbalanced due to a number of factors such as nutrient deficiencies, stress (dieting, over-exercising or psychological stress), high intake of caffeine, alcohol, sugar, refined carbs, gut-related conditions, and even low thyroid function.

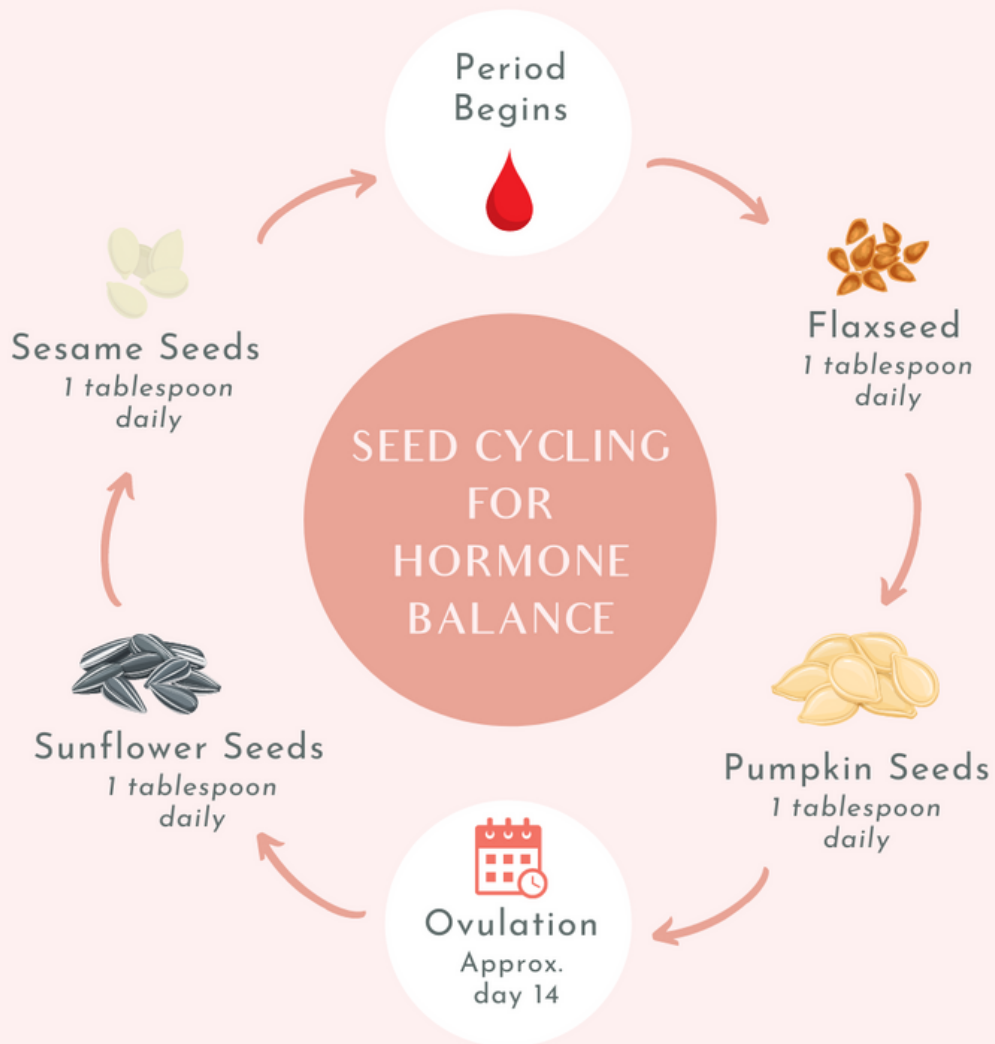
Subsequently, an imbalance between oestrogen and progesterone throughout the menstrual cycle, can contribute to a whole host of period problems, including delayed ovulation, irregular cycles, anovulatory cycles (where you don't ovulate in a cycle), heavy or long periods, missing periods, PMS symptoms (such as emotional spells, breast tenderness, anxiety, mood swings, headaches), cramps, acne, and short luteal phases—to name a few.

Seed cycling works well for women with irregular or missing periods, anovulatory cycles and painful periods, as well as for women with PMS symptoms, a short luteal phase (less than 10 days long) and heavy or clotty periods. It's also an amazing practice for drawing awareness and tuning into where you're at in the various stages of your cycle.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Four different types of seeds are rotated according to which phase of the menstrual cycle you are in.

- During the follicular phase, you incorporate pumpkin and flax seeds
- During the luteal phase, you incorporate sesame and sunflower seeds



THE BENEFITS TO YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE

This special combination of seeds contain a wide variety of vitamins, minerals, and essential fatty acids such as magnesium, zinc, iron, copper and calcium that help support ovarian hormone production (specifically oestrogen & progesterone) and thus overall menstrual health.

The seed hulls also contain lignans, which are a type of phytoestrogen (the other well known one is isoflavones), which are chemicals that are similar in structure to the body's oestrogen. This similarity may be why flax has either an oestrogenic or anti-oestrogenic effect on the body. We all respond differently, which is why it's important to experiment with what works for each of us.

Lastly, adding seeds to your diet adds fibre, which is essential to support the body's elimination of unwanted oestrogen and therefore reducing symptoms of hormonal imbalances (such as heavy, crampy periods)!



THE BENEFITS OF THE SEEDS

PUMPKIN SEEDS

Pumpkin seeds are true nutrient power houses. They contain nutrients such as copper, iron, manganese, magnesium, zinc and phosphorous that are essential for healthy periods.

It's worth eating pumpkin seeds for the zinc alone as zinc plays a key role in helping the follicles in the ovaries mature each month. It also improves PCOS-related issues like insulin resistance and high testosterone and supports thyroid hormone production. Additionally, because of zinc's anti-inflammatory effect, it can even support the reduction in period pain.

FLAX SEEDS

Flax seeds are rich in alpha linolenic acid (ALA). This is an omega-3 fatty acid that is a precursor to the EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) form of omega-3 which is found in oily fish. The seeds are rich in other nutrients including manganese, magnesium, and especially fibre (whole flax seeds are an excellent as easing constipation)!

Flax seeds are phytoestrogens meaning that when they bind to oestrogen receptors in the body, they can block more potent forms of oestrogen in the body from binding instead and, in some women, reduce symptoms of excess oestrogen (aka 'oestrogen dominance').

On the flip side, they can have an oestrogenic effect when natural oestrogens are low or in cases of amenorrhea (no period), which will have a positive effect on the menstrual cycle. There's also research to suggest that they help with anovulatory cycles (cycles where an egg is not released).

THE BENEFITS OF THE SEEDS

SESAME SEEDS

Sesame seeds are high in magnesium, calcium, zinc and lignans. Sesame seeds support both healthy bones and healthy hormones (yay!). They also contain B1, B3 and B6, which can be great for supporting mood and energy levels, fertility and stress.

B1, B3 and B6 have been shown to help minimise PMS symptoms. B6 improves symptoms of oestrogen dominance by helping the liver break down and deactivate excess oestrogen and by supporting the formation of progesterone.

SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Sunflower seeds are packed with vitamin E (a powerful antioxidant) which may impact progesterone levels in the luteal phase. It's been linked to a reduction in pelvic pain related to endometriosis and period cramps (this is likely as a result of the impact antioxidants have on inflammatory cytokines (the nasty things that, in excess, can cause pain)) .

They also contain B vitamins, magnesium, selenium and zinc. Selenium is found in large quantities in healthy egg follicles and plays a critical role in the later stages of follicle development, which will directly support healthy ovulation and hormone production. Selenium supports thyroid function and helps the liver in its detoxification role. Both the thyroid and the liver are essential organs for overall health and happy hormones!

HOW TO SEED CYCLE

The technique outlined below is for those with a cycle of between 24-35 days, if you have a cycle that is irregular or missing please see the next page (p.9).

Ground forms of the seeds are used as the nutrients are most available to the body in this form.

FOLLICULAR PHASE (DAY 1 UNTIL OVULATION)

Day 1 of your cycle until ovulation is called the Follicular phase. Day 1 is the first day of your period (first day of proper bleeding and not spotting). Ovulation typically happens around day 14(ish) but it can be earlier or later depending on your personal cycle and whether you have a hormonal imbalance.

Every day, eat:

- 1 Tablespoon of ground flax seeds
- 1 Tablespoon of ground pumpkin seeds

LUTEAL PHASE (~DAY 14 (OVULATION) UNTIL NEXT PERIOD)

Ovulation marks the beginning of the Luteal phase of your cycle where your body starts to produce progesterone. This is also known as the second phase of your cycle and it lasts until the day before your next period.

Every day, eat:

- 1 Tablespoon of ground sesame seeds.
- 1 Tablespoon of ground sunflower seeds.

HOW TO SEED CYCLE

If you have a regular cycle but don't ovulate on day 14, take the first round of seeds until you ovulate and switch to phase 2 seeds the day after you ovulate. For example, if you ovulate on day 18, take the Follicular phase seeds until day 18 and on day 19 switch to the Luteal phase seeds until your next period arrives. Don't stress if you miss it by a few days, after all, they're just seeds and won't have any negative impact on your hormones or any other aspect of your health!

If you don't have a regular cycle or your period is missing, I recommend starting today as Day 1 and include the Follicular Phase seeds for 2 weeks and then transition to the Luteal Phase seeds for the following 2 weeks.

You can keep alternating every 2 weeks until you regain regularity in your menstrual cycle and can pinpoint ovulation. While the specific nutrients of the seeds won't be complementing the fluctuations in your hormones, they will still ensure you are getting all of the goodness of the seeds in your diet which will still absolutely have a positive impact on your menstrual cycle!



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR SEEDS



Eating the seeds in a freshly ground form is ideal as the nutrients are easiest for the body to absorb and the seeds are less likely to move through your digestive system whole! If you're consuming them whole, ensure you chew them well to make sure the seeds are sufficiently broken down and the nutrients are absorbed!

Flax seeds in particular should be ground rather than consumed whole. It is best to purchase the whole seeds (raw, organic, and unhulled if possible) and use a coffee grinder or NutriBullet to grind them.

Only prepare a 2-day supply at a time as the ground seeds are susceptible to oxidation and can go rancid. Store the ground seeds in an airtight container or jar and keep in the refrigerator to maintain maximum freshness.

If you chose to buy the seeds already ground, ensure they are high quality and stored in an airtight bag that is foil wrapped to block sunlight (this will help to preserve the nutritive value of the seeds).

HOW TO ENJOY

The most convenient and enjoyable way to eat the seeds is to add them to food you already eat in your diet! They're a great addition to smoothies, salads, soups, sprinkled on oats or Greek yogurt.

I've linked some seed filled recipes from my website below for you to try!

- CRUNCHY COCONUTTY GRANOLA
- FOLLICULAR PHASE POWER BALLS
- LUTEAL PHASE BLISS BALLS
- BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

CRUNCHY COCONUTTY GRANOLA



FOLLICULAR PHASE POWER BALLS

LUTEAL PHASE BLISS BALLS



BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

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