

HEALTH

What's the alternative?

Bowen technique

Penny Murray-Smith, 49, from Dorset, had terrible periods until she had this treatment...



I'd suffered from heavy periods for years. I bled for three weeks out of four, and some days I couldn't even leave the house because the blood leaked through to my clothes.

It became so bad earlier this year that my GP referred me for an ultrasound scan. This revealed fibroids on my uterus, which were causing the bleeding.

I was told I'd need an operation to see if they should be removed, but because I was anaemic, I'd first have to build up my strength. However,

because of a liver condition, I can't take any prescription drugs or iron supplements, so there seemed to be no answer to my heavy periods.

Then my consultant gynaecologist suggested I try alternative remedies, which is how I stumbled across the Bowen technique. Devised by a chemist in the 1950s, it's designed to balance the body and stimulate energy flow so the body can heal itself.

I went to see a practitioner, John Wilks, who first asked me to give a history of my

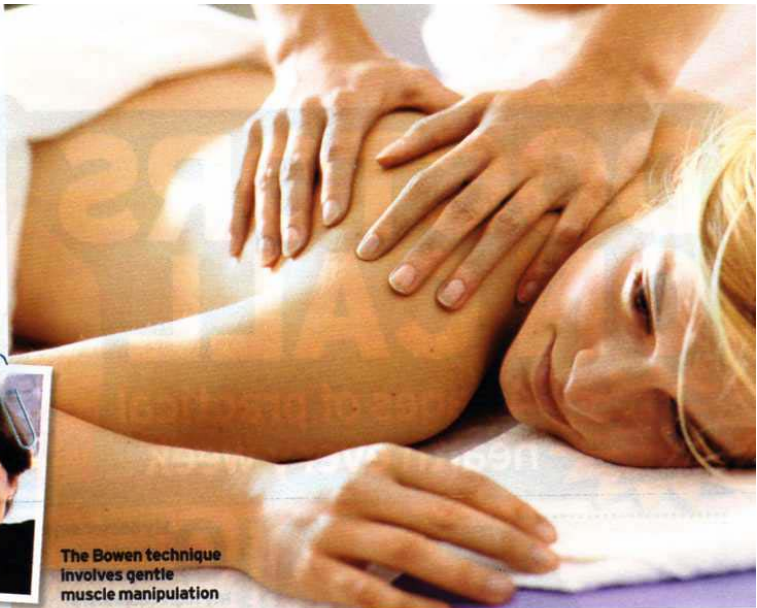
problems. I then lay down, fully clothed, and he used his fingers and thumbs to manipulate my muscles and ligaments, which felt like a gentle massage. Afterwards, I felt fantastic. If nothing else, it had helped to relax me, so I decided to book another appointment. Three months later, after five treatments, the results have astonished me.

My last two periods only lasted for 10 days and were nowhere near as heavy or

painful as they usually are, which seems like a miracle.

Even if my periods stayed like this and never got any better, I'd be quite happy. But I'm hoping my condition has improved so much that I won't even need the fibroid operation any more.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Treatments cost from £25 for an hour. Call 0700 269 8324, or visit www.bowen-technique.co.uk.



The Bowen technique involves gentle muscle manipulation

THE EVIDENCE

Although no studies have been carried out into how the Bowen technique can improve gynaecological conditions, it's been shown to help with pain relief, especially back pain and migraines. A study undertaken at the American Academy of Environmental Medicine in Kansas, for instance, showed an improvement in women who suffer from the muscular condition fibromyalgia.

A-Z OF PILLS

WARFARIN

WHAT IS IT?
An anticoagulant prescribed for heart problem patients to stop blood clots forming.

WHAT DOES IT DO?
It limits the effect of excess vitamin K, which the liver uses to make chemicals to clot the blood.

SIDE EFFECTS?
Hair loss, diarrhoea, rashes or nausea and vomiting, bruising, and, more seriously, bleeding and jaundice.



My baby was born with a hole in her heart

I was 20 weeks pregnant with my daughter, Lily, when a scan showed she had two holes in her heart. I feared I'd lose my baby. When Lily was born on 26 June 2003, a blue ring round her lips showed she had poor circulation. She needed an operation to close the holes, which she had in October that year.

After surgery, Lily recovered, but she soon got worse again. Her heart valve was torn as a complication of the surgery and her condition. Further surgery didn't solve the problem, and it was only in January 2004 that she was strong enough for more, though she was only given a four per cent chance of survival. But it went well, and we were thrilled. Nearly three years on, the way she chases after her sister, Jamie, who's eight, you'd think nothing was wrong with her.

Ann Micallef, 28, Dagenham, Essex



Ann with Lily

CONGENITAL HEART DEFECTS IN BRIEF

Around eight in every 1,000 babies in the UK are born with a heart defect. The cause is usually unknown, although smoking, drug taking or drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause the condition.

For further information, call 08450 708 070, or visit www.bhf.org.uk.