

IMPACT OF ABNORMAL VAGINAL DISCHARGE (YONISRAVA) ON WOMEN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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ABSTRACT

Background: Normal vaginal discharge is physiological and preventive, as pH of the vagina and wetness keep the vagina clean and provide lubrication to protect against tearing and injury. Change in either of these results in abnormal vaginal discharge which interferes with a women's physical, social, and emotional quality of life. *Yonistrava* can be compared to abnormal vaginal discharge characterized by whitish vaginal discharge, itching in the vulvar region, bad odor, low backache and sometimes burning sensation. In Ayurvedic literature, *nidaanparivarjana* (avoidance of disease-causing and aggravating factors) and *balyachikitsa* with *rasayana* drugs

(Immunity-boosting therapy) are the treatment principles. **Observations:** By improvement in general health and personal genital hygiene, the body becomes less prone to infection. A full screen to exclude Sexually Transmitted Infections is essential to avoid delayed diagnosis and possible long-term complications. **Conclusion:** Recommended prevention, early diagnosis and differentiation between normal and abnormal vaginal discharge, and prompt treatment with proper counseling among the young and sexually active group is an important aspect of its management.

KEYWORDS: *Yonistrava*, Abnormal vaginal discharge, *Yonivyapada*, Women Health and wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

Vaginal discharge is an extremely upsetting condition for a woman, which can result from a variety of physiological and pathological conditions. Globally abnormal vaginal discharge counts in 1-14% of all the women in the reproductive age group. The prevalence of excessive

vaginal discharge in India is estimated to be 30%.^[1] Incidence of vulvovaginal symptoms including vaginal discharge is mostly due to vulvovaginal candidiasis in 27% of patients, bacterial vaginosis in 21%, trichomoniasis in 8%, chlamydia trachomatis in 2%, Neisseria gonorrhea in 1%, and no infection in 34% cases.^[2] The exact pathology of the disease is unpredictable, where women experience abnormal vaginal discharge which has a strong impact on their self-esteem, sexual relationships, and quality of life. Vaginal discharge is most likely to be normal, and non-pathological. Physiologically some biochemical processes influenced by diet and hormone levels, particularly estrogen, middle age, associated with the mid of the menstrual cycle (at the time of ovulation) are associated with some kind of vaginal discharges.

Yonistrava (abnormal vaginal discharge) is one of the common complaints in gynecological practice. *Yonistrava* is not a disease, but a symptom of many *yonivyapada* (disease of the reproductive system of female) developed due to vitiation of *kapha* and *vata* (bodily humors) like *atyananda*, *karnini*, *aticharana*, *shlesmala*, *upapluta* and *prasramnini* (types of *yonivyapada*). In Ayurvedic literature, the words *swetapradara* and *yonistrava* are used for abnormal vaginal discharges/white discharges. In the reference of *Yonivyapada pratishedham* *yonistrava* is characterized by *picchila* (lubricous), *sheetla* (coldness), *sleshmla* (mucous discharge), and *kandulakshana* (with itching properties) are mentioned.^[3]

Yonistrava is a condition characterized by whitish vaginal discharge associated with itching in the vulvar region (*kandu*), bad odor (*yonidaurgandhaya*), low backache (*katishula*) and sometimes burning sensation (*daha*). It can be categorized and understood under various *yonivyapada* (various gynaecological disorders) like *kaphajayonivyapada*, resembling with trichomonas vaginitis, *karnini yonivyapada* approximate to cervical erosion, *acharana yonivyapada* be like constitutional nymphomania, *atyananda yonivyapada* -neurosis and psychosis of women, *aticharana* women discharge the *raja* repeatedly before the ejaculation of the male partner, *upapluta* relate with monilial vulvovaginitis during pregnancy and *parisruta jataharini* women looks emaciated with excessive vaginal discharges.^[4] Sometimes purulent, thick foul-smelling, and mucoid vaginal discharge are also included in *yonistrava*.

In modern gynecology, vaginal discharge should fulfill the following criteria^[5]

1. The excess secretion evident from persistent vulvar moistness or staining of the undergarments (brownish-yellow on drying) or need to wear a vulval pad.

2. Is non-purulent and non-offensive.
3. Is non-irritant and never cause pruritus.

Due to abnormal vaginal discharge, women experience a bad impact on their physical health like itching, discomfort, rashes over the vulvar region, backache, weakness in the body, and sometimes pain during urination. Emotionally and psychologically she feels shy or nervous to discuss this with her partner and others. Women feel embarrassed, dirty, and very concerned that others may detect their mal-odor and stains of abnormal vaginal discharge, such women are self-conscious of their symptoms avoid family gatherings. If we see the prevalence, 34% of conditions are having no infections but still, they suffer from physical, psychological, and sexual problems. Ayurveda has the best potential to cope with such a situation and to maintain the healthy state of the women.

Causes of abnormal vaginal discharge (AVD)

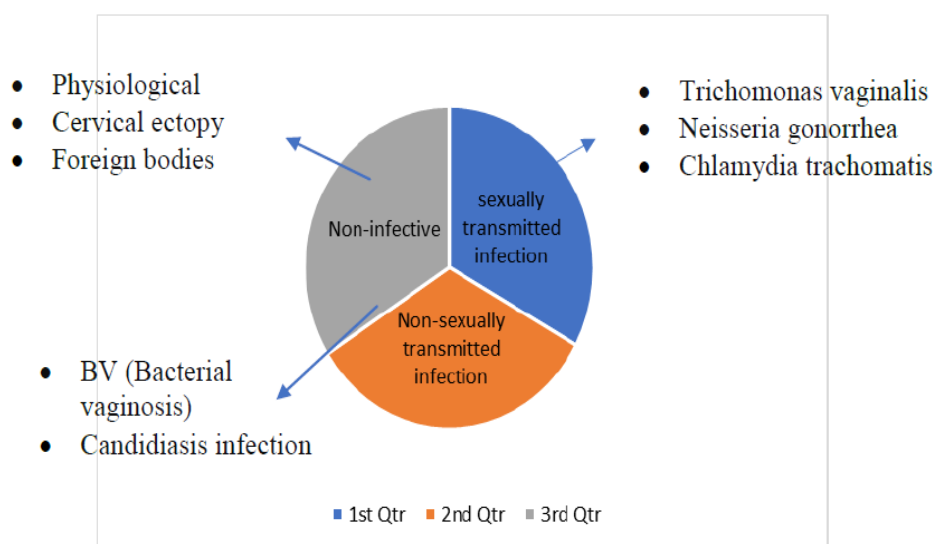


Fig. 1: Showing etiology of AVD.

Non-infective vaginal discharge increases in conditions when estrogen levels become high, it is non-purulent, non-offensive, and non-irritant. It increases in such conditions as around ovulation, premenstrual period, during puberty (overgrowth of endocervical epithelium and increased levels of estrogen), pregnancy (hyperestrogenism with increased vascularity and cervical gland secretion), and during sexual excitement. Therefore when this normal discharge increases in the amount it becomes abnormal vaginal discharge.

Influence of abnormal vaginal discharge on women's physical, psychological and sexual well-being

The most common reproductive tract symptom is abnormal vaginal discharge. Women's lack of knowledge regarding the causes leads to un-ability to differentiate between normal and abnormal vaginal discharge. This causes extreme anxiety and distress to women, impacting heavily on their social and sexual lives. The control and cure of abnormal vaginal discharge are disproportionately high among poor women, representing a physical, emotional, lack of decision-making power, and financial burden for low-income background women.^[6] Such women often report feeling stigmatized, experiencing significant anxiety, self-blame, less confidence, feeling insecure and embarrassed around their diagnosis, fear of disclosing their status to others, and concern around future sexual interaction and relationships. Vaginal discharge is also associated with a greater risk for various STIs and HIV infection. Women have fear of sexual partners noticing their vaginal discharge, fishy smell, then they often avoid certain sexual positions. Bacterial vaginosis has been associated with serious outcomes including miscarriage, increased risk of HIV, preterm delivery, and sexually transmitted infections (STI).^[7]

Features of abnormal vaginal discharge.^[8]

Symptoms and signs	Candidiasis	Bacterial vaginosis	Trichomoniasis	Cervicitis
Organisms	Budding yeast or hyphae	Coccobacilli Adherent to cells	Mobile flagellated organisms	Variable
Odor	Maybe 'yeasty'	Offensive, fishy	Maybe offensive	-
Potassium hydroxide	Budding yeast or hyphae	Negative	Negative	Negative
Gram stain	Budding yeast or hyphae	Gram-negative coccobacilli	Trichomonas (flagellated organisms)	Gram-negative intracellular diplococci
pH	<4.5	4.5-7.0	4.5-7.0	Usually >4.5 and variable
Confirmed by	Microscopy and culture	Microscopy	Microscopy and culture	Microscopy, tests for chlamydia and gonorrhoea

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Ayurvedic and modern literature, research papers, journals, and articles published on various national and international platforms (Google Scholar and PubMed) were studied, analyzed,

interpreted, and scrutinized thoroughly to understand abnormal vaginal discharge and its impact on women health and well-being.

OBSERVATION

It is seen that a major group of women suffering from abnormal vaginal discharge have non-infective type.^[2] It is relevant to differentiate physiological discharge from pathological vulvovaginal discharge to prevent complications of untreated reproductive tract infection. Women's interpretations of vaginal discharge were assigned toward several factors in women's experiences, individually the quality of matrimonial, reproductive, and family life.

So, vaginal discharges will be regulated and treated by observing measures as

- A full screening to exclude STI is essential to avoid delayed diagnosis and possible long-term complications.
- The vaginal area should be clean but excessive cleaning causes colonization of vaginal flora and may alter vaginal pH level.
- Improve general health and personal hygiene (genital tract).
- In Ayurvedic literature - avoidance of disease-causing and aggravating factors and immunity developing measures^[9] are basic treatment principles mentioned.

Characteristic of *yonisrava* in various *yonivyapadas*

Pichhila yoni (Lubricous)

- *Kaphaja, karnini, acharana, aticharana, atyananda yonivyapada*,^{[3][10][11]} *tridosaja yonivyapada*, and *kaphajapradara*^[10]
- *Upapluta yonivyapada*,^{[11][12]}
- *Sheleshmala yonivyapada*,^{[13][14]}

Shwetala (Whitish)

- *Tridosaja yonivyapada, upapluta yonivyapada*,^{[10][12]}

Kanduyukta (With itching)

- *Kaphaja yonivyapada*,^{[3][10][11][12]}
- *Karnini, acharana, atyananda, aticharana yonivyapada*^[3]
- *Vipluta yonivyapada*^[12]
- *Sheleshmala yonivyapada*,^{[13][14]}

Snigdha (Unctuousness)

- *Kaphajapradara*^[10]

Yonim-avedana (Without vaginal pain)

- *Kaphaja yonivyapada*^[11]

Svedanam (With pain)

- *Sheleshmala yonivyapada*^[13]

Sheetla (Coldness)

- *Karnini, acharana, atyananda, aticharana yonivyapada*^[3]
- *Kaphajapradara*^[10]
- *Kaphaja yonivyapada*,^{[3][10][11][12]}
- *Sheleshmala yonivyapada*^{[13][14]}

DISCUSSION

Some socio-demographic factors are associated with abnormal vaginal discharges like the age group, marital status, marital age, place of living, history of abortion, educational status etc. More prevalence is seen in married women than in unmarried, divorced, and widow, in early age marriages (<18years), in rural area than urban area, among illiterate, in alcohol consumers and smokers, in joint than nuclear family.^[15] Due to the lack of knowledge and carelessness, women get vaginal infection frequently. Therefore awareness is very important aspect for which Reproductive Tract Infections (RTI) preventive programs should be integrated with other reproductive health care programs such as family planning, maternal and child health services. It has been revealed as a global burden where discharge, changes its consistency with mal-odor and low backache. As per modern aspects, vaginal discharge is mainly due to trichomonas vaginalis, bacterial vaginosis, and candidiasis infection. The main objective of this study is to determine the prevalence of vaginal discharge and its impact on women's health and well-being. The word *yonisrava* is generally found in Ayurvedic classics in terms of *shwetasarava* or *yonisrava*. In *yonivyapada chikitsa* of CharakaSamhita it is mentioned that “*nahi vatadriteyoniirnaarinaamsampradushayati*”^[10] means any genital disease of a female does not arise without the vitiation of *vata dosha*. Treatment with unctuous, astringent therapy, bio purification drugs are beneficial.

In insufficiently resourced rural regions, with poor literacy, heavy agricultural and domestic labor, and inadequate access to quality health care, many women are not able to maintain reproductive health and wellbeing. Reproductive health guidance should be requisite for adolescent girls and women to empower them to recognize abnormal vaginal discharge quickly. Furthermore, it is prime to tutor this community on the condition and associated significant health outcomes considering their socio-economic/ socio-cultural background. This condition can only be prevented if all the patients are counsel and educate properly. Most abundantly general factors like poverty, malnutrition, unhygienic vaginal region, and poor living conditions affect women's health. According to some studies a positive correlation of duration, frequency, and quantity of non-pathological vaginal discharge with depression, anxiety, and stress is being emphasized. As with an increase in discharge severity, depression, anxiety, and stress also increase.^[16]

According to Ayurveda, *kaphaja*, *acharana*, *aticharana*, and *upapluta yonivyapada* can present abnormal vaginal discharge as main symptom.^[15] It is managed with *jantughna/krimighna* (Antimicrobial, antifungal drugs), *kandughna* (Relieves itching), *daurgandhayanashak* (Reduce foul smell), *stambhaka* (Decrease secretion), *lekhana* (Scraps unhealthy epithelium), *vranasodhana/ropana* (Decontaminate/rejuvenate wound), *mutrala* (Diuretic), *rasayana* (Immunomodulation of vagina) and *sothghna* (Anti inflammation) effect of drugs.^[17]

There are various procedures mentioned in Ayurveda to manage abnormal vaginal discharges as-

- Drugs or measures capable of suppressing all the three *doshas* as well as cleansing the *yoni* should be prescribed. eg-Use of *kashaya* (astringent) drugs in local form as *kalka-dharan* (*tuvrakkalka*), *pichu* (*udumbaradi tail pichu*), and *basti* (*dhatkyaditailasnehabasti*) is useful.^[10]
- *Kapha-nashak chikitsa* is also useful, external and internal use of *katu* (bitter), *kashaya* (astringent), and *natyushna* (neither hot nor cold) drugs and *sodhana vartis* (*palashadivarti*) (Cleansing suppositories).^[10]
- *Yoni-dhupana* (*Saralguggulu, yavadhupana*) is also beneficial in *yoni-srava*.^[10]
- Use of *kashaya* (decoctions) made with the drugs of mainly *kashaya rasa* (astringent) as *yoni-dhawana*, use of oils prepared with *kashaya rasa* as *yoni-pichu*, *abhyanga* or *basti* is beneficial.^[4]

CONCLUSION

Early diagnosis, differentiation between normal and abnormal vaginal discharge, proper counseling of females, especially the young and sexually active group is the major aspect of the condition. Ayurvedic management offers a good approach in managing abnormal vaginal discharge, both by *shodhana* (biopurification therapy) and *shamana* (pacifying therapies).

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