

AYURVEDIC APPROACH FOR MENOPAUSAL HEALTH ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Menopause, a significant phase in a woman's life, marks the end of menstrual cycles, typically occurring in women between 45 and 55 years of age. This transition is often accompanied by a variety of physical and psychological symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and sleep disturbances, profoundly impacting a woman's quality of life. *Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian system of medicine, offers a holistic approach to managing menopause through dietary, lifestyle, and herbal interventions. In *Ayurveda*, menopause is considered a natural transition, known as "*Rajonivritti*," associated with the decline of reproductive health and the onset of *Vata Dosha* predominance. *Ayurvedic* texts emphasize the balance of the *three Doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha)* to alleviate menopausal symptoms. Key *Ayurvedic* practices include a balanced diet, regular exercise, yoga, meditation, and the use of specific herbs like *Ashwagandha*, *Shatavari*, and *Brahmi*, which are known for their rejuvenating and hormone-balancing properties. This is an attempt to explore the *Ayurvedic* perspective on menopause, highlighting the holistic strategies for managing its symptoms and improving overall well being. By integrating traditional Ayurvedic practices with modern medical understanding, women can achieve a smoother transition through menopause and enhance their quality of life.

KEYWORDS: Menopause, *Rajonivritti*, psychological symptom, herbal intervention, holiostic approach.

INTRODUCTION

The word menopause derived from the Greek words "menos" meaning month and pause meaning "to cease". So, menopause means the "monthly stops". According of Ayurveda, the term *Rajnoviritti* is made up of two words i.e. "*Rajah + Nivritti*", where *Rajah*" means *Artava* i.e menstrual blood and "*Nivritti*" means cessation.

In Ayurveda Samhita description of *Rajonivritti* (Menopause) is given and the age of *Rajonivritti* is mentioned by *Acharaya Sushruta* as 50years.^[1] *Acharya Sushruta, Acharya Arundatta* opines that the age mentioned above is a probable age not fixed one, there may be some variation in this regard.^[2] As *Rajonivritti* is not described in the Ayurveda classics as a separate disease. There is no detailed information available regarding its *Nidana*, *Purvarupa*, *Rupa*, *Samprapti* etc. So, to understand this condition as a disease, certain basic principles of Ayurveda have to be considered. Concentrating on the probable *Nidanas* (etiological factors) regarding the condition *Rajonivritti*, few factors can be squeezed out. Some of these factors are mentioned by *Acharyas* in the context of "*Rajah Utpatti Hetus*", too. These factors can beconsidered as *Rajah Nivritti Hetus* also.

***Rajonivritti* can be divided into two types**

- *Kalaja Rajonivritti*
- *Akalaja Rajonivritti*

Akalaja rajonivritti can be caused by excessive exercise, fasting, *Chinta*, *Ruksha* (without oil- ghee) little and permissive food, consumption of strong wind and sunlight, fear, grief, *Ruksha Madyapana*, night awakening etc.^[3]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Different *Ayurvedic* classical books, research papers and journals were referred to fulfill this part, it comprise of subsection dealing with prevention & management of menopausal syndrome in Ayurveda.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. *Ayurvedic* approach for menopausal health issues.
2. Exploring *Ayurvedic* alternatives to hormone replacement therapy in treating menopause

symptoms, according to *Ayurveda* with *Ayurveda* herbs and therapies.

SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE^[4]

- Hot flashes, headache
- Weight gain
- Depression, fatigue, insomnia,
- Mood swings, palpitations
- Dementia, anxiety
- Dyspareunia, low libido, vaginal dryness
- UTI, urine incontinence
- Joint pain

We can divide these symptoms according to *Dosha* that is *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*-

Vata Dosha symptoms include anxiety, nervousness, dyspareunia, vaginal dryness, loss of muscle tone, irregular menses, disturbed sleep, bloating and joint pain.

Pitta Dosha symptoms include hot temper, anger, irritability, hot flashes, skin rashes, excessive bleeding, UTI.

Kapha Dosha symptoms include weight gain, lethargy.

COMPLICATIONS

Post-menopausal women are at high risk for fracture of bones due to Osteoporosis and Cardiovascular disease due to decreased Estrogen level. Estrogen plays an important role in maintaining bone health by inhibiting osteoclastic activity and enhancing calcium absorption from the gut, thereby preventing osteoporosis. Estrogen helps maintain heart health by increasing high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and decreasing low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and total cholesterol levels. Estrogen's antioxidant property also helps to prevent atherosclerosis, further reducing cardiovascular risk.^[5]

Treatment

Effective management of menopausal symptoms begins with counseling, which is essential for every woman experiencing symptoms. Through counseling, women can gain a comprehensive understanding of the physiological and psychological changes occurring during menopause, alleviating fears and misconceptions. This clarity of mind can

significantly reduce symptoms like anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Lifestyle modifications play a crucial role in managing menopausal symptoms. These modifications include regular physical activities, such as morning walks and yoga, reducing high caffeine intake (tea/coffee), Quitting smoking and alcohol consumption, increasing calcium intake.^[6]

- Nutritious diet is recommended.
- Soya protein is found to be effective in reducing menopausal symptoms.
- Vitamin E reduces hot flash.
- Calcium sources for decreasing BMD (bone mineral density).

In modern medicine Hormone replacement therapy is the primary treatment for menopausal symptoms, which is not a long-term therapy to be given as it has side effects on the overall health of the women. In Ayurveda *Dhatukshaya* can be treated with *Rasayana* therapy and other symptoms of hypo-estrogenic conditions can be treated with Phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens have both estrogenic and anti-estrogenic property and action, depending on the target tissue. Phytoestrogens exert their effect in a selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM), through this they affect the endogenous production of estrogen. Other than this we can use drugs with *Madhura Rasa*, *Madhura Vipaka* and *Sheet Veerya* are used, they will pacify *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas*. Medicated oil can also be used for local application.^[7]

Specific treatment^[8]

- *Yashtimadhu*, *Brahmi Medhya Rasayana* and are useful for memory boosting and improving neural functioning
- *Aamlaki Churna* – act as *Rasayana*.
- *Ashwagandha Churna Ksheerpaka*, *Shatavari Churna Ksheerpaka*, *Arjuna Twak Churna Ksheerpaka Rasayana* therapy.
- Cardamom, aloe vera, *Shatavari*, saffron, sandalwood *Vatahara* and *Pittahara* herbs.
- *Sarwang Abhyanga*, *Shirodhara*, *Shirobasti*, *Shiropichu* for hot flash and other psychological symptoms.
- *Madhuyashti* or *Shatpushpa Tail*, *Yoni Pichu* for dyspareunia.
- *Shankha Bhasma*, *Praval Bhasma*, *Kapardika Bhasma*, *Ashwagandha* preparations - for falling Bone Mineral Density (BMD) as they contain calcium.
- *Lashuna* or Garlic based preparations, *Navak Gugglu*, *Shunthi Churna*, *Triphala Guggul*, etc are also useful. These drugs not only help in shedding weight but also reduce harmful lipids in blood which usually rise after menopause.

Pathya-Apathya***Pathya***

- ✓ Early bedtime and get up early.
- ✓ Regular morning walk (at least 30 minutes).
- ✓ Regular practice of *Yoga* and *Pranayama*, like *Suptabaddha Konasana*, *Setubandhasana*, *Seetkari Pranayama*, *Bhramari Pranayama*, *Anulomaviloma*.
- ✓ Introduce a *Vata-Pitta* pacifying diet that is warm, fresh, properly cooked food.
- ✓ Take regular meals on time.
- ✓ Consume green leafy vegetables and legumes.
- ✓ Avoid sour and spicy food items.
- ✓ Avoid high sugar containing food item.
- ✓ Drink coconut water.
- ✓ *Abhyanga* (Oil massage) using almond and olive oil and *Nasya* (nasal medication).

Apathya

- ✓ Hot spicy foods, hot drinks and alcohol.
- ✓ Caffeine and other stimulants.
- ✓ Refined sugar cold drinks.
- ✓ Eating late at night.

DISCUSSION

In Ayurveda, *Rajonivritti* (menopause) is not considered a disease, but a natural occurrence in a woman's life, marking the end of her reproductive phase. Almost all *Acharyas* uniformly agree that menopause typically occurs around age 50, which is still the average age today. The cause of *Rajonivritti* at this stage of life is simply a decrease in the amount of *Rasa Dhatu* available for the sustenance of its *Updhatu*, or by-product, which in females is *Rajah*. *Rajah* is a byproduct of *Rasadhatu*, whose function is better in *Taruna Avastha* (i.e. *Yuvavastha*) but diminishes in *Praudha Avastha* (Late Adulthood), eventually leading to *Rajonivritti* (menopause) when a woman reaches the age of senescence. Because *Rajonivritti* is a normal occurrence in the female body, it can be classified as part of the *Swabhavika Vyadhis*, which include *Jara* (ageing), *Kshudha* (hunger), *Pipasa* (thirst), *Nidra* (sleep), and *Mrityu* (death) as stated in the *Vedas*. *Rajonivritti-Janya Avastha* has many of the same symptoms as *Jaravastha* in its early stages. As a result, "*Gatartava*" or "*Nishphala*" is one of the synonyms for "Old woman." As a result, *Rajonivritti* can be inferred to be a portion

of the ageing process unique to females, and it denotes the onset of geriatric age in women. The *Swabhavika Vyadhis* are divided into two categories: *Kalaja* and *Akalaja*. *Rajonivritti* is a naturally occurring condition that can be divided into two types: *Kalaja Rajonivritti* (Menopause) and *Akalajarajonivritti* (Menopause). The majority of *Rajonivritti's* *Lakshanas* are caused by *Vata Vriddhi*, *Kapha Kshaya*, and *Ashayapakarsha* of *Pitta* caused by aggravated *Vata*. *Rajonivritti* is also linked to the vitiation of *Manovaha Srotas* and *Dhatukshaya*, all of which indicate the onset of old age. Ayurveda has been shown to be effective in the management and prevention of chronic illnesses. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is more commonly used in modern medicine, although it has major side effects such as an increased risk of reproductive cancers and metabolic problems. This is why it's so important to comprehend menopause conceptually through Ayurveda and come up with safe therapies to prevent morbid symptomatology during this stage. The current study is a genuine attempt to discover an efficient complementary therapy regimen.

CONCLUSION

In Ayurveda, *Rajonivritti* is considered as a natural transition in a woman's life, occurring around age 50, marking the end of her reproductive phase. This transition triggers hormonal imbalances, leading to various symptoms that impact daily life. So, to maintain this imbalance of hormones, *Doshas* and *Rasa Dhatu Kshaya* a proper balanced diet with regular exercise and *Yogasana* is advised. Ayurveda gives a better approach at understanding *Rajonivritti* along with number of herbal medicines and therapies which are effective with no side effects.

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