

AN AYURVEDIC APPROACH FOR GRACEFUL MENOPAUSE

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ABSTRACT

Every single phase of a women's life is beautiful and considered very important right from the moment she entered the world and in adolescence which makes her able to be prepared for motherhood and finally to attain menopause. Menopause is generally defined as the cessation of menses for period of 12 months or the time of cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhea. Menopause is oestrogen deficient phase which leads to the various signs and symptoms which includes hot flushes, sweating, mood changes, loss of libido, vaginal dryness osteoporosis etc. In Ayurveda the context of menopause is described as "*Jarapakwa Avastha*" of body and *Rajonivrutti*. *Rajonivrutti Janya Lakshana* is produced by degenerative changes in the body which are explained in Ayurveda as *Dhatukshaya Lakshana*. *Vata Dosha* dominance is seen in the later stage of life. imbalance of the *Dosha* and *Dhatukshaya* occurs as a natural & gradual

physiological consequence of aging. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is the only alternative available in modern medicine which has a wide range of side effects on the female body. Ayurveda has excellent solution for a safe & graceful transition into menopause which provides a holistic treatment of menopausal syndrome which includes correction of hormonal imbalance with appropriate diet and lifestyle modifications, use of various herbs and minerals, *Samshamana* and *Panchakarma* therapy, *Rasayan* therapy etc. These all promotes longevity and improves the quality of life. Thus an effort is being made here, to study the menopausal syndrome, conceptually, based on Available information in Ayurvedic texts and other contemporary resources and make it graceful to enjoy this phase.

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INTRODUCTION

Women are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family. Moreover it is the women who have sustained the growth of society and moulded the future of nations. In the emerging complex social scenario, empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries. The propagation of the species is a basic aim of nature. “woman has a vital role to play.” Right from the moment that she entered the world even in adolescence which makes her able to experience motherhood and finally to attain the transition to menopause. Menopause is generally defined as the cessation of menses for period of 12 months or a period equivalent to three previous cycles or the time of cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhea.^[1] It is a natural phenomenon occurs at the age of 45-55 years. Various hormonal changes take place in the body during this phase of life; which results in development of several signs and symptoms which disturb the routine activities. During reproductive years, women are protected by female hormones, i.e., estrogen and progesterone. With menopause, women has estrogen deficient phase which accelerates the ageing process resulting into psychosomatic problems. These diminished hormonal levels lead to the various symptoms which includes vasomotor symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, headache, insomnia, dizziness, etc. Psychological symptoms include mood swings, anxiety, depression, irritability. Other symptoms include loss of libido, vaginal dryness, dyspareunia, osteoporotic changes as well as cardiovascular changes. Incidence and prevalence rate of postmenopausal syndrome is 78% of population, but only 19.5% of the symptomatic women take treatment.^[2] Currently, the number of menopausal women is about 43 million and projected figures in 2026 have estimated to be 103 million.^[3] In Ayurveda, Menopause is described as “*Jara Pakva Avastha*” of body and *Rajonivrutti*. Though, *Rajonivrutti* is not described separately in the classical Ayurveda texts, *Rajonivrutti Kala* is mentioned by almost all *Acharyas*. According to *Acharya Sushruta* and various other references, 50 years is mentioned as the age of *Rajonivrutti*.^[4] Menopause is *Vata Dosha* dominated stage of life. *Rajonivrutti Janya Lakshan* is a group of symptoms produced by degenerative process of body which are explained in Ayurveda as *Dhatukshaya Lakshana*.

- **Modern aspect of menopause**

Menopause is defined as permanent cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhoea between age of 45-50 years of average is 47 years. Climacteric is a phase of declining in ovarian function. Therefore no corpus luteum and hence no progesterone is

secreted by the ovary leading to anovulatory cycle and thus irregular menstruation occurs. Later graffian follicle formation also stops, estrogen activity and atrophy of endometrium leads to amenorrhoea. Therefore, there is a fall in estrogen level and rebound increase in FSH and LH by anterior pituitary gland.^[5]

In some cases, menopause is induced, or caused by injury or surgical removal of the ovaries and related pelvic structures. Common causes of induced menopause include:

- Bilateral oophorectomy i. e. surgical removal of the ovaries
- Ovarian ablation means the shutdown of ovarian function, due to hormone therapy, surgery, or radiotherapy techniques in women with oestrogen receptor-positive tumours
- Pelvic radiation.
- Pelvic injuries that severely damage or destroy the ovaries.

- **Menopausal Symptoms**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot flushes | <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mood changes | <input type="checkbox"/> Vaginal dryness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atrophic vaginitis | <input type="checkbox"/> Cystitis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drying out and thinning out of skin | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Palpitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of libido |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Osteoporosis | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety/Depression |

- **Diagnosis of Menopause**

1. Cessation of menstruation for 12 consecutive months.
2. Appearance of menopausal symptoms “hot flush “and “night sweat”.
3. Vaginal cytology showing maturation index of at least 10/85/5 (feature of low oestrogen).
4. Serum oestradiol level 40 mIU/ ml (three values at weeks interval required)

- **Management**

1. Counselling
2. Multivitamins and Antioxidants supplement
3. HRT (hormonal replacement therapy)

It has wider range of side effects like vaginal bleeding, breast cancer, endometrial cancer etc. and has increased incidence of malignancy and thromboembolic disease.

Ayurvedic aspect of Menopause

Sushruta Acharya has explained that there is *Shareera-shaithilyata* in *Vrudha-avastha* (old age) and women attains *Rajonivritti* at around 50 years. This age is dominated by *Vatadosha* which affects the female body. This “imbalance of the Dosha (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) which occurs as a natural and gradual physiological consequence of aging. The vitiated *Vata dosha* also disturbs the other *Sharir* as well as *Manas dosha* (*Raja* and *Tama dosha*) leading to various psychological disturbances.

• **Nidana of Rajonivrutti**

The specific reasons for *Rajonivrutti* are not described in the Ayurvedic texts. But the most probable reasons are as following^[6]

1. *Swabhava*
2. *Jarapakvasharira due to Kala*
3. *Dhatukshaya*
4. *Effect of Dosha*
5. *Vayu*
6. *Abhighata*

• **Lakshanas of Rajonivritti**

There is no direct reference available regarding *Lakshanas* of *Rajonivritti* in the Ayurvedic texts, the clinical symptoms of *Rajonivritti* can be considered as *Dhatukshayaja Lakshanas* along with vitiated *Doshas*.

In old age all seven *Dhatus* undergoes degenerative changes which causes various effects on female body.

- *Rasakshay* - *Shabda Asahishnuta*, *Hridravata*, *Shool*, *Shrama*, *Shosha*, *Trushna*.
- *Raktakshay-Updhatu artavkshaya* which results in *Rajonivrutti*, *Twakrukshata* and *Sirashaithilyata*.
- *Mansakshay-Sphikgandadishushkata*, *Toda*, *Rukshata*, *Glani*, *Sandhi Sphutan*, *Sandhi vedana*, *Dhamani shaithilya* is seen.
- *Medokshaya-Angarukshata*, *Shrama*, *Shosha*, *krushta* is seen.
- *Ashtikshay- Asthi kshaya* and *Sandhi Shaithilya* occurs in *Asthidhatu kshaya*.
- *Majjakshaya-Asthisousharya*, *Asthitoda*, *Dourbalya*, *Bhrama*, *Tamah darshan*, *SandhiShunyatva*.
- *Shukrashay-Yonivedana*, *Shrama*, *Dourbalya*, *Panduta*.

Samprapti of Rajonivritti (Menopausal syndrome)

In *Vrudhavasta* due to Increased *Vata dosha* which affects the *Manas guna* (*Raja* and *Tama*) leading to psychological disturbances and *Dhatukshaya*, *Upadhatu kshaya* (*Artava kshaya*) in this *avastha* results in Menopausal symptoms.

Ayurvedic Management

Various Ayurvedic drugs having properties of *Rasayana*, *Vata shamak* and *Kapha vardhan* can be helpful in the management of menopausal syndrome. *Rasayana* drugs prevent the aging process, strengthens the body. *Rasayana*, also increases life span and memory. *Acharya Charaka* explains *Rasayana Prayojana* as life promoter, maintains positive health, preserves health, and preserves youth, and cures morbid sleep, drowsiness, physical and mental fatigue, laziness, weakness. It helps in balancing *Tridosha*, produces stability, cures smoothness of muscles, stimulates enzymes responsible for digestion & metabolism and brings about excellence in lusture, complexion and voice.^[7]

Following Medicines can be used to overcome the menopausal symptoms

Dashmool- it is known herbal combination to balance the *Vata dosha*.

Bala-it is an excellent anti-oxidant.

Shatavari-it is phytoestrogenic herb, filled with isoflavonoids, antioxidants, fibres and vitamins.

Ashwagandha- some clinical studies have established that if used singly in menopausal patients it controls effectively the vasomotor symptoms.

Yastimadhu- it is *Rasayan* drug which is promoting agent for life voice, hair, strength and libido.

Chandrashur- it is *Balya* (body strengthening), *Vatashaman* (herbs which normalize *Vat dosha*).

Gokshur- it is aphrodisiac, anabolic anti inflammatory, Agent Saponin in it promote libido.[8]

Amalaki- it contains highest amount of stable vitamin C conjugated with gallic acid, this complex is powerful antioxidants cytoprotective and immune-modulatory action which promotes anti aging action.

Yoga therapy - *Yoga* is an ancient holistic art of living that include physical, mental, moral, spiritual spheres. It has eight limbs of *Yoga* - *Yama*, *Niyam*, *Aasana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahar*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*. The most commonly performed *Yoga* practices are postures (*Aasana*), controlling breathing (*Pranayama*) & Meditation (*Dhyana*).

Asana- Savasana, Padhmasana, Varjasana Pranayama -Sheetali Pranayama, Ujjayi Pranayama. This *Yoga* Therapy is useful to decrease risk of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance & loss of bone mineral density as well as improved psychological wellbeing, sleep patterns & emotional modulation also beneficial in relieving stress as well as improves the muscle tone.

DISCUSSION

Menopause is not only an estrogen deficient state but it is associated with large number of symptoms which disturbs women's routine life. Menopause is linked with Vata dosha dominated stage of life. Therefore symptoms in menopausal phase like insomnia, anxiety, urinary symptoms, osteoporotic changes are due to dominance of Vata dosha. Along with that Pitta dosha symptoms like hot flushes, irritability, etc are seen, during this phase. *Rajonivrutti janya lakshan* is a group of symptoms produced by degenerative process of body tissue. Degenerative changes are explained in Ayurveda as *Dhatukshaya lakshana*. *Sushruta Acharya* has explained that there is *Shareera-shaithilyata* in *Vrudhaavastha* (old age) and women attains *Rajonivritti* stage at around 50 years. This age is dominated by *Vata dosha*, this dominant *Vata dosha* affects the female body.^[7] The dominant *Vata dosha* results in reduction in *Dravata* of *Rasa dhatu* which leads to respective *Updhatu kshaya*. Thus leading to *Artava nasha* (amenorrhea). The vitiated *Vata dosha* also disturbs the other *Sharir* as well as *Manas dosha* (*Raja* and *Tama dosha*) leading to various psychological disturbances. Thus according to Ayurveda we can make a correlation between the different menopausal symptoms seen in the body. To combat the degenerative process of the body tissue *Acharyas* have described *Rasayana Chikitsa*. *Rasayana* includes drugs which promotes longevity and improve the quality of life. Ayurvedic drugs having properties of *Rasayana*, *Vata Shaman* and *Kapha Vardhan* along with *Panchakarma*, balanced diet, *Yoga* can be helpful for the graceful menopause.

CONCLUSION

Each phase of a woman's life is beautiful and should be considered as gracious. Nowadays, symptoms related to menopause are becoming a major problem; for which a safe and effective line of treatment is necessary. The basic concept of Ayurvedic medicine is "*Swasthya Swastya Rakshanam* and *Aturasya Vikara Prasamanam*" prevention is better than cure. Ayurveda have different way to overcome the menopausal symptoms. The ways are like; Diet, *Samshana Chikitsa*, *Panchakarma*, *Rasayana*, *Yoga*, *Pranayama* etc. Menopausal

symptoms generally occur due to disturbed *Vata Dosha*. *Dhatukshay* is responsible for *Vata Vruddhi* and vitiated *Vata Dosha* affects various systems in women's body. From the above theory we can conclude that various Ayurvedic drugs having properties of *Rasayana*, *Vata Shaman* and *Kapha Vardhan* along with *Panchakarma*, balanced diet, *Yoga* can be helpful for the graceful menopausal and overcome the menopausal syndrome.

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