

**A REVIEW ARTICLE ON AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT OF
MENOPAUSE: RESTORING HARMONY DURING THE TRANSITION****Mansi Joshi^{1*} and Prabha Kumari²**

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ABSTRACT

Menopause is a natural and inevitable transition in a woman's life, marking the permanent cessation of menstruation and ovulation due to a decline in the production of estrogen and progesterone. Typically occurring between the ages of 45-55, it signifies the end of a woman's reproductive years. Transitions such as irregular periods, hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and vaginal dryness, long-term health risks, including osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline, may also develop. Ayurveda, the ancient holistic system of medicine, views menopause not as a disease but as a natural phase of life. Referred to as "*Rajonivrutti*," it is understood as a consequence of imbalances in the *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*) and *Dhatukshaya* associated with aging. Ayurveda emphasizes restoring balance through personalized lifestyle modifications, dietary adjustments, and the use of herbs and minerals. Therapies such as *Panchakarma*, *Rasayana*, and

yoga are integral to managing menopausal symptoms and improving overall well-being. A positive lifestyle, incorporating stress management, regular exercise, proper nutrition, and weight control, plays a crucial role in alleviating menopausal symptoms and supporting the endocrine and immune systems. This holistic approach empowers women to embrace menopause as a transformative and liberating phase, fostering health and vitality in later years.

KEYWORDS: Menopause, *Rajonivrutti*, *Rasayan*, *Medhya Rasayana*, *Panchakarma*, *Yoga*.

INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a natural, physiological milestone in a woman's life that marks the end of menstrual cycles and the reproductive phase. Menopause means permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to loss of ovarian follicular activity.^[1] While it is not a disease, it brings significant physical, emotional, and hormonal changes that can influence a woman's health for the rest of her life. In Ayurveda, menopause, referred to as *Rajonivritti*, is viewed as a normal physiological process rather than a pathological condition. The term *Rajonivritti* combines two Sanskrit words: *Rajah*, meaning menstrual blood or flow, and *Nivritti*, meaning cessation or end. Thus, it signifies the cessation of menstruation.

The age of menopause (*Rajonivritti Kala*) has been mentioned by almost all ancient *Acharyas* without any disagreement. According to *Acharya Sushruta*, menarche typically begins at the age of 12, and menopause occurs around the age of 50 as a natural consequence of aging. *Acharya Vagbhata* and *Bhavamishra* also mentioned similar ages for the start and end of menstruation.

While menopause concludes fertility, it also provides an opportunity for women to focus on personal growth and new activities. Despite this, many women lack adequate knowledge about the process and their options for managing it, including proper diet, exercise, and nutritional support. This review article explores Ayurveda's holistic approach to menopause, aiming to provide insight into its management and promote a smoother transition into this new chapter of life.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To explore and understand menopause from an Ayurvedic perspective.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ayurvedic Samhitas, Ayurvedic Textbooks.

Causes

Menopause is a natural process resulting from the aging of the ovaries, which leads to a decrease in the production of hormones like estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone. In some cases, menopause may be induced by factors such as the surgical removal of both ovaries

Common causes of induced menopause include:

- Bilateral oophorectomy, which is the surgical removal of both ovaries.

- Ovarian ablation, where ovarian function is halted through hormone therapy, surgery, or radiotherapy, often in women with estrogen receptor-positive tumors.

Menopausal symptoms

- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Insomnia
- Joint pain
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Palpitations
- Vaginal dryness
- Mood swings
- Thinning and dryness of the skin
- Anxiety
- Vasomotor symptoms
- Urogenital atrophy
- Cardiovascular disease
- Osteoporosis and fracture
- Cerebrovascular diseases
- Psychological changes
- Sexual dysfunction
- Dementia and cognitive decline.

Diagnosis of menopause^[2]

- a. Cessation of menstruation for consecutive 12 months during climacteric.
- b. Appearance of menopausal symptoms “hot flash” and “night sweat”
- c. Vaginal cytology– showing maturation index of at least 10/85 /5 (feature of low estrogen)
- d. Serum estradiol <20 pg /ml
- e. Serum FSH & LH > 40 mIU/ ml

MANAGEMENT

1. Counselling and reassurance.
2. Antioxidants and multivitamins to improve overall well-being.

3. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):

- While effective, HRT is associated with a broad spectrum of potential secondary health risks, including vaginal bleeding, breast cancer, and endometrial cancer.
- There is also an increased risk of developing malignancies and thromboembolic disorders.

Ayurvedic perspective on menopause

In Ayurvedic texts, menopause is referred to as "*Rajonivrutti*", which signifies the cessation of *Artava Pravritti* or the end of the menstrual cycle. The symptoms associated with menopause are described as "*Rajonivrutti Anubandh Vyadhis*", reflecting the various health conditions and challenges that arise during this phase.

Rajonivrutti kala (Age of menopause)

The age of menopause, called *Rajonivrutti Kala*, is mentioned by all ancient scholars without disagreement. Texts like *Sushruta Samhita*^[3] and *Astanga Hridayam*^[4] state that *Rajonivrutti* usually happens around the age of 50, as the body naturally begins to age.

Ayurveda explains menopausal symptoms as the result of an imbalance in the *Doshas* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*), which naturally occurs with aging.

Types of rajonivrutti (Menopause)

In Ayurveda, all diseases are categorized into four main types: *Agantuj* (external causes), *Sharira* (Physical causes), *Manas* (Mental causes), and *Swabhavika*^[5] (Natural causes). Focusing on the *Swabhavika* type, this includes conditions that occur naturally, such as hunger (*Kshudha*), thirst (*Pipasa*), sleep (*Nidra*), aging (*Jara*), and death (*Mrityu*),^[6] as mentioned by *Acharya Sushruta* under the term *Swabhavabalapravritta*.

Although these are naturally occurring processes, they can sometimes become acquired conditions, referred to as *Doshaja*, and are further classified into two types: *Kalakrita* (Occurring at the right time) and *Akalakrita* (Occurring at an inappropriate time). Similarly, *Rajonivrutti* (Menopause) is considered a naturally occurring condition like aging and can be categorized into two types:

1. *Kalaja rajonivrutti*

- When menopause occurs at the expected age (around 50 years), it is termed *Kalaja Rajonivrutti*.

- *Acharya Sushruta* states that timely menopause happens when proper healthcare practices are followed.
- This condition can be managed and supported with *Rasayana therapy* (rejuvenative treatments).

2. *Akalaja rajonivrutti*

- When menopause occurs either earlier or later than the expected age (around 50 years), it is called *Akalaja Rajonivrutti*.

Lakshanas of *rajonivrutti*

Ayurvedic classics do not provide direct references to the symptoms of *Rajonivrutti*. However, the clinical signs observed in menopausal women are considered to result from *Dhatukshaya* combined with the imbalance of *vitiated Doshas*.

1. *Vataja lakshana*

Shirahshoola (Headache), *Hrida Spandana* (Palpitations), *Hasta Pada Supti* (Numbness), *Adhmana* (Abdominal distension), *Vibandha* (Constipation), *Sandhi Vedana* (Joint pain), *Asthivedana* (Bone pain), *Yoni Shushkata* (Vaginal dryness), *Prabhutamutrata* (Frequency of urination), and *Mutrakrichhrata* (Painful urination), *Anavasthita Chitatvam* (Mood swings), *Chinta* (Anxiety), *Smritimandhya* (Memory loss), and *Vaichitya* (Lack of concentration), *Krichchhra Vyavayata* (Loss of libido), *Maithunaasahishnuta* (Dyspareunia), and *Yoni Vedana* (pain in the vagina).

2. *Pittaja lakshana*

Osha (Hot flushes), *Atisveda* (Sweating), *Amarsha* (Irritability), *Yoni Daha* (Burning sensation in the vagina), *Yoni Daurgandhya* (Foul vaginal odor), and *Mutradaha* (Burning sensation in urine).

3. *Kaphaja lakshana*

The symptoms associated with this condition include *Atisthaukya* (Weight gain), *bala kshaya* (Lethargy), *Vishaada* (Depression). Hormonal changes may be observed, such as thyroid malfunction, fibrocystic changes in the uterus or breasts, and excessive fluid retention. Additionally, *Yoni Kandu* (Vaginal itching) and *Yoni Srava* (Vaginal discharge) may also occur.

Ayurvedic management for menopausal syndrome

Menopausal symptoms are primarily caused by the aggravation of *Vata* dosha, along with other *doshic* imbalances. In the early stages of pre-menopause, it is essential to balance the disturbed *doshas* to minimize the severity of menopausal symptoms, which can sometimes be entirely avoided. This can be achieved by adhering to a *dosha-specific diet and lifestyle practices*, along with regular use of *Ayurvedic herbs* like *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), *Arjuna* (*Terminalia arjuna*), *Cardamom* (*Elettaria cardamomum*), *Garlic* (*Allium sativum*), *Guggul* (*Commiphora mukul*), *Amla* (*Emblica officinalis*), *Saffron* (*Crocus sativus*), *Mustard* (*Brassica nigra*), *Haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*) etc.

If symptoms continue, *Panchakarma* is beneficial for eliminating imbalanced *doshas* and restoring equilibrium. After this, the use of Ayurvedic herbs, decoctions, and other preparations support a smoother transition into menopause. Ayurveda provides comprehensive solutions for a safe and comfortable menopausal experience.

Ayurvedic Treatment for Menopausal Symptoms involves correcting dosha imbalances through an appropriate diet, *Samshamana therapy*, *Panchakarma* or *Samshodhana therapy*, *Sattvavjaya Chikitsa* (Counselling and Reassurance), *Yoga therapy*, and *Rasayana therapy* (Rejuvenation treatment).

Panchakarma

- ***Snehana***: Application of medicated oils like *Bala oil* and *Mahanarayan oil* over the body to nourish tissues, loosen toxins, and prepare for detoxification.
- ***Swedana***: Inducing sweating using *Dashmul* decoction or *Pottali Pind Sweda* to open pores and expel toxins.
- ***Shirodhara***: Effective for psychological symptoms such as stress and disturbed sleep, using *Shatavari oil*, *Takra Dhara*, or *Dashmool Kwath*⁷ to promote relaxation and mental balance.
- ***Nasya***: Instillation of medicated oils like *Anu tail* through the nasal passages to clear channels and enhance cognitive function.
- ***Uttarbasti***: Administration of medicated oils, such as *Yastimadhu tail*, through the vaginal or urethral opening to address reproductive health and detoxification.
- ***Pichu***: Placement of medicated tampons soaked in *Shatavari tail* or *Shatdhaut Ghrita* in the vagina for local nourishment and therapeutic effects.

- **Basti:** Specifically, *Anuvasan Basti* (oil-based enema) is used to cleanse the colon, balance Vata dosha, and promote gut health.

Yoga therapy

It is an ancient and holistic art of living that addresses the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual dimensions of life. Derived from the Sanskrit word "yoga," meaning "union," the practice of yoga seeks to harmonize all aspects of the self. It is structured around the *eight limbs of yoga*: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*.

Asanas like *Shavasana*, *Padmasana*, and *Vajrasana*, promote relaxation, flexibility, and stability. *Pranayama*: Techniques such as *Sheetali Pranayama* and *Ujjayi Pranayama*, help regulate breathing, calm the mind, and energize the body.

Yoga therapy is a valuable complementary and integrative approach for menopausal women. Researches indicates that practicing yoga during the menopausal transition can significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, improve insulin sensitivity, and prevent bone mineral density loss. Additionally, it enhances psychological well-being, promotes better sleep patterns, and helps regulate emotional fluctuations, making it an effective tool for overall health and balance during menopause.

Rasayana therapy

Rasayana therapy serves as a comprehensive rejuvenation method that not only delays the aging process but also restores youthfulness and vitality to an individual. It enhances life span, memory, intelligence, health, and physical strength while improving complexion, voice quality, and the functionality of cognitive and conative organs. *Rasayana* drugs act by nourishing all the seven *Dhatus*. According to *Aacharya Charaka*, *Rasayana*^[8] promotes a long and healthy life, sharp memory, talent, a youthful and lustrous appearance, bright complexion, strength of the body and senses, a glowing physique, truthfulness, and respectability. He described *Rasayana* as a means to invigorate health, vitality, and vigor. Similarly, *Maharsi Shusruta* defined *Rasayana*⁹ as a therapeutic approach that retards aging, enhances longevity, vitality, and talent, and strengthens the body to resist ailments.

Medhya rasayana

Ayurvedic texts highlight specific *Rasayana* drugs that enhance *Medha* (Intellect) and promote cognitive abilities, collectively referred to as *Medhya Rasayana*.^[10] *Aacharya Charaka* identified four *Medhya Rasayanas*: *Shankhapushpi*, *Mandukaparni*, *Guduchi*, and *Yashtimadhu*. Recent scientific studies on these *Medhya Rasayana* drugs have demonstrated their potential in improving intelligence and memory while exhibiting anxiolytic and psychotropic properties to varying degrees.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda acknowledges the decline in sex hormone levels starting around the age of 35. While Western medicine attributes menopausal symptoms primarily to this hormonal decline, Ayurveda views these symptoms as part of the natural aging process. Aging is described in Ayurveda as *Nishpratikriya* (inevitable changes) and *Swabhavabal Roga* (natural disease).

The Ayurvedic concept of *Rajonivritti* (menopause) occurring in a *Jarapakva Shareer* (aged body) at around 50^[11] years aligns with modern studies showing the average age of menopause to be 51 years. With advancing age, there is a progressive decline in the qualities of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Agni*, and *Oja*.^[12] Many symptoms of perimenopause and menopause arise not only from declining sex hormones but also as part of the natural aging process. The Ayurvedic perspective highlights this gradual decline in vital qualities beginning in a woman's 40s and 50s, prompting further exploration into the pathology of menopausal symptoms and the aging process.^[13]

CONCLUSION

Menopausal health issues often arise from long-standing imbalances, with diet playing a key role in hormonal balance. A diet rich in phytoestrogens, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans, is beneficial, but moderation is crucial to avoid harmful effects. Ayurveda attributes persistent symptoms to toxins (*ama*) in the body, treatable through detoxification therapies like *Panchakarma*. Lifestyle management is equally important, as menopause serves as a natural reminder to prioritize health and well-being.

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