Menopausal Syndrome - Ayurvedic Review

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ABSTRACT

Each phase of a women’s life is beautiful and should be considered as gracious. Right from the moment that she entered the world, or when she steps in adolescence which makes her capable to be prepared to experience motherhood, or finally the transition to menopause. The word ‘Menopause’ comes from the Greek word ‘Menos’ (month) & ‘Pausis’ (cessation). Menopause is a gradual and natural transitional phase of adjustment between the active and inactive ovarian function and occupies several years of a women’s life and involves biological and psychological changes adjustments. During the period of menopause, the women enter an oestrogen deficient phase which leads to the various symptoms. In Ayurveda the context of menopause is depicted as “Jarapakwa Avastha” of body and Rajonivrutti. Rajonivrutti Janya Laksana is a group of symptoms produced by degenerative changes in the body. Degenerative changes are explained in Ayurveda as Dhatukshaya Lakshana. Vata Dosh dominance is seen in the later stage of life. In Ayurveda, Menopausal symptom are regarded as imbalance of the Dosha [Vata, Pitta, Kapha] and Dhatukshya which occurs as a natural & gradual consequence of aging. Ayurveda has excellent solution for a safe & happy transition into menopause. Ayurveda, the science of life, advocates a holistic treatment of Menopausal syndrome by modification of diet & life style, utilizing various herbs and minerals and offers a reliable option to the convention treatment. Ayurvedic treatment for menopause involves correcting hormonal imbalance with appropriate diet, Samshamana therapy, internal detoxification (Panchakarma therapy), Rasayan therapy and Yoga therapy.

Key words: Menopausal syndrome, Menopause, Rajonivrutti, Rasayan, Panchakarma, Yoga therapy.

INTRODUCTION

The propagation of the species is a basic aim of nature. In the multiplication of humans, “woman has a pivotal role to play.” Right from the moment that she entered the world, or when she steps in adolescence which makes her capable to be prepared to experience motherhood, or finally 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] Menopause 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 that may disturb the routine activities. During reproductive years, women are protected by female hormones, i.e., estrogen and progesterone. With menopause, women enter an estrogen deficient phase in their lives, which accelerates the ageing process resulting into greater vulnerability to psychosomatic problems. These diminished hormonal levels lead to the various symptoms seen in menopausal phase which includes vasomotor symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, headache, insomnia, dizziness, etc. Psychological symptoms include mood swings, anxiety, depression, irritability, etc. Other symptoms include loss of libido, 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. So, menopausal health demands even higher priority in Indian scenario.

In Ayurveda, the context of Menopause is depicted as “Jara Pakva Avastha” of body and Rajonivrutti. Though, Rajonivrutti as a diseased condition is not described separately in the classical Ayurveda texts, Rajonivrutti Kala are mentioned by almost all Acharyas without any controversy. According to Acharya Sushruta and various other references, 50 years is mentioned as the age of Rajonivrutti. 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 those 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. Degenerative changes are explained in Ayurveda as Dhatukshaya Lakshan.

Modern Aspect of Menopause

Menopause is defined as permanent cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhea, it occurring between ages 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 graafian follicle formation also stops, oestrogen activity and atrophy of endometrium leads to amenorrhea. Therefore, there is a fall in oestrogen level and rebound increase in FSH and LH by anterior pituitary gland.

Cause of Menopause

Menopause is a natural process that occurs as the ovaries age and produce less reproductive hormones. The body begins to undergo several changes in response to lower levels of:

- Follicle-stimulating hormone (fsh)
- Luteinizing hormone (LH)

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, or surgical removal of the ovaries
- Ovarian ablation, or the shutdown of ovary function, which may be done by 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

Hot flushes
Insomnia
Mood changes
Vaginal dryness
Atrophic vaginitis
Cystitis
Drying out and thinning out of skin
Palpitations
Loss of libido
Osteoporosis
Anxiety/Depression

Diagnosis of Menopause

1. Cessation of menstruation for consecutive 12 month during climacteric.
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; 40 mIU/ ml (three values at weeks interval required)
Management
1. Counselling
2. Antioxidants and multivitamins
3. HRT (hormonal replacement therapy)

HRT has wider range of secondary health complications like vaginal bleeding, breast cancer, endometrial cancer etc. There is increased incidence of malignancy and thromboembolic disease.

Ayurveda aspect of Menopause

In Ayurveda, Menopausal symptoms are regarded as “imbalance of the Dosha (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) which occurs as a natural and gradual consequence of aging.

Nidana of Rajonivrutti

The specific reasons for Rajonivrutti are not described in the Ayurvedic texts. But the most probable reasons for it to occur are:
1. Swabhava
2. Jarapakvasharira due to Kala
3. Dhatukshaya
4. Effect of Dosha
5. Vayu
6. Abhighata

Types of Rajonivrutti

In some manners, Rajonivrutti is a naturally occurring condition in every woman as that of Jaravastha etc. Swabhavika Vyadhies. So Rajonivrutti also can be divided into two types:
1) Kalaja Rajonivrutti
2) Akalaja Rajonivrutti

Lakshanas of Rajonivrutti

As there is no direct reference available regarding Lakshanas of Rajonivrutti in the Ayurvedic classics, the clinical symptoms manifested by the patients of Rajonivrutti are the manifestations of Dhatukshaya Lakshanas along with vitiated Doshas.

Samprapti of Rajonivrutti (Menopausal syndrome)

Vataja Lakshana
- Shirahshoola (Headache), Hrid Spandana (Palpitation), Hasta Pada Suti (Numbness), Shabda Asahishnuta (Noise-Intolerance), Bala-Kshaya (Weakness), Adhmana (Distension of abdomen), Vibandha (Constipation), Anidra/Alpanidra (Sleeplessness), Bhrama (Vertigo), Anavasthita Chitatvam (Mood swing), Vaichitya (Loss of concentration), Vishaada (Depression), Chinta (Anxiety), Smritimandhya (Decreased memory), Krichchhra Vyavayata (Loss of libido), Maithunaasahishnuta (Dyspareunia), Vak Sang (Change in voice), Vali (Wrinkling of skin), Asthivedana (Pain in bones), Katisshool (Low backache), Sandhi Vedana (Joint pain), Vamanatvam (Loss of ht.), Angamarda (Body ache), Yoni Vedana (Pain in vagina), Yoni Shushakta (Vaginal dryness), Prabhutamutrata (Frequency), Urge incontinence, Mutrakrichhrata (Pain in micturition).

Pittaja Lakshana
- Osha (Hot flushes), Atisveda (Sweating), Amarsha (Irritability), Yoni Daha (Burning sensation), Yoni Daurgandhya (Foul smelling), Mutradaha ( Burning sensation in Urine).

Kaphaja Lakshana
- Atisthaulaya (Weight gain), Yoni Kandu (Itching), Yoni Srava (Vaginal discharge).
Management

From the above theory we can conclude that various Ayurvedic drugs having properties of Rasayana, Vata Shaman and Kapha Vardhan can be helpful in the management of menopausal syndrome. In the early pre-menopause stage it is better to balance the aggravated or underplaying factors, so that the intensity of the menopause symptoms will be far less or even can be negligible. Ayurveda has excellent solution for a safe and happy transition into menopause. Ayurvedic Treatment for Menopausal Symptoms involves correcting Dosha imbalance with appropriate diet, Samshamana therapy, internal detoxification (Panchakarma therapy/Samshodhan therapy), Sattvavjaya Chikitsa, Yoga therapy, Rasayan therapy.

Vata dominant menopause

Diet - Increase warm food and drinks, regular meals, and use spices such as fennel and cumin. Decrease caffeine and other stimulants, refined sugar, cold drinks, salads.

Lifestyle - Early bedtime, oil massage using almond and olive oil, meditation, yoga, Regular exercise like walking

Herbs - Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera), Arjuna (Terminalia arjuna), Cardamom (Elettaria cardamom), Garlic (Allium sativum), Guggulu (Commiphora mukul), Sandalwood (Santalum alba) and Zizphus (Ziziphus jujube).

Pitta dominant menopause

Diet - Increase cooling foods, water intake, sweet juicy fruits (grapes, pears, plums, mango, melons, apples, zucchini, yellow squash, cucumber, organic foods. Use spices such as cinnamon, cardamom and fennel. Avoid hot spicy foods, hot drinks and alcohol.

Lifestyle - Oil massage using coconut and sesame oil. Use Meditation and other techniques to reduce anger, hatred and resentment. Exercise and exposure to the sun are limited.

Herbs - Aloevera, Arjuna (Terminalia arjuna), Amla (Emblica officinalis), Saffron (Crocus sativus), Sandalwood and Use spices such as cinnamon, cardamom and fennel.

Kapha dominant menopause

Diet - Prefer light, dry and warm food, Consume fruits, whole grains, legumes, and vegetables. Use spices such as black pepper, turmeric and ginger. Avoid meat, cheese, sugar, cold foods and drinks. Weekly fasting is helpful. Most or all of the daily food should be consumed before 6 p.m.

Lifestyle - Get up early. Mustard oil and linseed oil are often recommended for massage.

Herbs - Cinnamon, Guggulu (Commiphora mukul), Mustard (Brassica nigra), Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Nagarmotha (Cyperus rotundus).

Panchakarma

- Snehan - (Appling medicated oil all over the body) Bala oil, Mahanarayan oil.
- Swedan - (taking steam) using Dashmul decoction, Pattali pind sweda.
- Shirodhara - Shirodhara found to be effective in the management of disturbed psychological symptoms. Shirodhara with Shatavari oil, Takra dhara, Dashmaool kwath can be helpful.
- Nasya - (instillation of oil through nasal opening) Panchendriya vardhan oil, Anu tail.
- Uttarbasti - (medicated oil is instillation through the vaginal or urethral opening) Yastimadhu tail.
- Pichu - (medicated tampons kept in the vagina) Shatavari Tail, Shadhath Ghrita.
- Basti - specially Anuvasan Basti (oil based medicated enema).

Yoga therapy - Yoga is an original & ancient holistic art of living that include physical, mental, moral, spiritual spheres. The Sanskrit word Yoga means to “join or union” and the practice of Yoga beings this union to all levels of one’s self. The eight limbs of Yoga - Yama, Niyam, Aasana, Pranayama, Pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyyana, Samadhi. The most commonly performed Yoga practices are postures (Asana), controlling breathing (Pranayama) & Meditation (Dhyyana) Asana -
Savasana, Padhmasana, Varjasana Pranayama - Sheetali Pranayama, Ujjayi Pranayama. Yoga Therapy is a useful adjunctive complementary & integrative for menopausal women. Current evidence indicates that women will benefit from Yoga therapy during menopausal transition in term of decrease risk of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance & loss of bone mineral density as well as improved psychological wellbeing, sleep patterns & emotional modulation.

**Rasayana Therapy**

Rasayana therapy is not only preventing the aging changes, but it brings in youth fullness to a person. It increases life span, memory, & intelligence health; improve color & complexion, Strength & performance of the organs of cognition & conation. Rasayana drugs act by strengthening all seven Dhatus. According to Aacharya Charaka, Rasayana produces long life lasting memory, talent, healthy physique, youth, lustre bright complexion, good voice, strength of body and senses, truthfulness, respect, and glowing body.[8] Aacharya Charaka has described “Rasayana” as a means to promote vigour and health which is mainly virilific and promotive of vitality.[8] Maharsi Susruta has defined ‘Rasayana’ as the method which retards the aging process, increases longevity, talent, vitality and makes the body fit to overcome the factors causing ailments.[8] Many drugs act as Rasayana property:

**Triphala**

Triphala consisting of Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Vibhiti (Terminalia belerica), Amalaki (Emblica officinalis), pacify all the three Doshas & also is an excellent Vayasthapana (anti-aging agent)

**Ashwagandha (Withana somnifera)**

- It is a powerful antioxidant & immune modulator.
- It is one that improves strength, muscle mass, relieves stress.
- In Menopause patient, it controls effectively the vasomotor symptoms (Hot flushes, night sweats, palpitation)

**Yasthimadhu (Glycrrhiza glabra)**

- It is another Rasayana drug which is prescribed for Menopause.

- It is an excellent antioxidant, Immuno modulator & anti-depressant, memory enhancer.
- It is described as a promoting agent for life, voice, hair, complexion, strength & libido.
- Classical anti-aging Formulation e.g., Chyavan Prasha & Brahm Rasayan.

**Medhya Rasayana**

The Ayurvedic texts describe certain Rasayana drugs which specially influence the Medha and promote mental competence. Such Rasayan are called as Medhya Rasayana. Aacharya Charak has described four Medhya Rasayanas namely Sankhpushpi, Mandukaparni, Guduchi and Yastimadhu.[10] Such Medhya Rasayana drugs have been scientifically studied in recent years and they have been reported to possess varying degree of Anxiolytic and psychotropic activity besides restoration of intelligence and memory.

**CONCLUSION**

Each phase of a woman’s life is beautiful and should be considered as graceful 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 “Swasthysa 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, Panchkarma, 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, Sadvrutaa, balanced diet, Yoga, meditation can be helpful for the management of menopausal syndrome.

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