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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 Lakshana* is a group of symptoms produced by degenerative changes in the body. Degenerative changes are explained in *Ayurveda* as *Dhatukshaya Lakshana*. *Vata Dosha* dominance is seen in the later stage of life. In *Ayurveda*, Menopausal symptom are regarded as imbalance of the *Dosha* [*Vata, Pitta, Kapha*] and *Dhatukshaya* 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

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2026 have estimated to be 103 million.^[3] 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*.^[4] 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 Lakshana*.

Modern Aspect of Menopause

Menopause is defined as permanent cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhoea, 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 amenorrhoea. Therefore, there is a fall in oestrogen level and rebound increase in FSH and LH by anterior pituitary gland.^[5]

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:

- Oestrogen
- Progesterone
- Testosterone

- 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^[6]

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

Types of Rajonivrutti

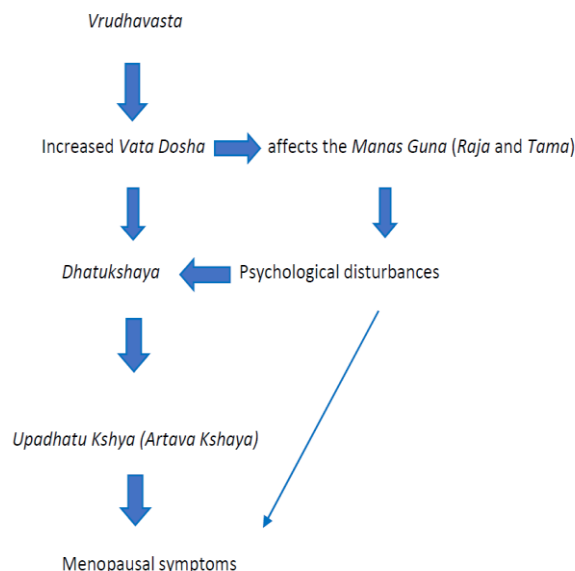
In some manners, *Rajonivrutti* is a naturally occurring condition in every woman as that of *Jaravastha* etc. *Swabhavika Vyadhies*. So *Rajonivrutti* also can be divided into two types:

- 1) *Kalaja Rajonivrutti*
- 2) *AkalajaRajonivrutti*

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 *Dhatukshayaja 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), *Katishool* (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 cardomam*), *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* - (Applying medicated oil all over the body) *Bala* oil, *Mahanarayana* oil.
- *Swedan* - (taking steam) using *Dashmul* decoction, *Pottali pind sweda*.
- *Shirodhara* - *Shirodhara* found to be effective in the management of disturbed psychological symptoms. *Shirodhara* with *Shatavari* oil, *Takra dhara*, *Dashmool kwath* can be helpful.^[7]
- *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*, *Shatdhaut 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*, *Dhyana*, *Samadhi*. The most commonly performed *Yoga* practices are postures (*Aasana*), controlling breathing (*Pranayama*) & Meditation (*Dhyana*) *Asana* -

Savasana, Padhmasana, Varjāsana Pranayama - Sheetalī Pranayama, Ujjayī 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 *Dhatu*s. 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.^[9] Many drugs act as *Rasayana* property:

Triphala

Triphala consisting of *Haritaki (Terminalia chebula)*, *Vibhitaki (Terminalia bellerica)*, *Amalaki (Embelica 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 (Glycerrhiza 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 *Yasthimadhu*.^[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 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 “*Swasthsya 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 Dasha*. *Dhatukshay* is responsible for *Vata Vruddhi* and vitiated *Vata Dasha* 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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