

AYURVEDIC APPROACH FOR A GRACEFUL MENOPAUSE –A REVIEW ARTICLE

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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 natural phenomenon occurs at the age of 45-55 years. After the age of 40 years, ovaries reduce their production of sex hormones. As a result, the menses as well as other body functions are disturbed. Finally the menses cease permanently. This ultimate pause is described as menopause. Needless to say that this phase also marks the end of natural fertility in a woman. Irregular periods, hot flushes, night sweats, vaginal dryness and itching, and mood swings-- all these are typical symptoms of menopause. Osteoporosis, heart disease and Alzheimer's disease (progressive loss of memory and concentration) are the long-term hazards of menopause. The group of signs and symptoms associated with the phase of menopause are termed as menopausal syndrome. In *Ayurveda*, Menopause condition is termed as '*Rejonivrutti*' (and menopausal syndrome as *Rajonivruttianubandhajavyadhies*). In *Ayurved*, 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.

Keyword: Menopause, *Rajonivrutti*, *Rasayan*, *Yoga*, *Dhatukshya*

INTRODUCTION

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 natural phenomenon occurs at the age of 45-55 years. Menopause means permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to loss of ovarian follicular activity.⁽¹⁾ Needless to say that this phase also marks the end of natural fertility in a woman. Irregular periods, hot flushes, night sweats, vaginal dryness and mood swings all these are typical symptoms of menopause. Osteoporosis, heart disease and Alzheimer's disease (progressive loss of memory and concentration) are the long-term hazards of menopause. The group of signs and symptoms associated with the phase of menopause are termed as menopausal syndrome. menopause has become an inevitable phenomenon in a woman's life and many years are spent in the postmenopausal phase. In this millennium, a woman perceives menopause as an opportunity to concentrate on new activities and bring out the best in her. Consequently, treatment of this transitional phase has now gained more importance than ever before.

Cause of Menopause-

1. Menopause is because by the nature declining function of the ovaries .Which gradually produces lower and lower levels the hormones oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone.
2. Other causes include surgery that removes both ovaries or some type of chemotherapy

Menopausal symptoms-

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Trouble sleeping /Insomnia
- Joints pain
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Palpitation
- Vaginal dryness
- Mood swing
- Loss of libido
- Impaired memory
- Urinary incontinence

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 estrogen)
4. Serum estradiol ;<20 pg /ml
5. Serum FSH & LH > 40 mIU/ ml (three value at weeks interval required)⁽²⁾

Complication of Menopause :

1. Cardiovascular disease
2. Osteoporosis
3. Urinary incontinence
4. Sexual function
5. Weight gain

Ayurvedic view for Menopause-In Ayurvedic classics Menopause condition is termed as "Rajonivrutti & Menopausal symptoms (Rajonivruttianubandhvyadhies) The whole term Rajonivrutti means end of ArtavaPravritti or cessation of menstruation.

Rajonivrutti Kala (Age of Menopause)

: Though Rajonivrutti as a diseased condition is not described separately in the classic, Rajonivruttikala is mentioned by almost all Aacharya without any controversy.

According to *Sushruta* and various other references (*AstangaHridayam*) too 50 years is mentioned as the age of *Rajonivrutti*⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾ when the body is fully in grip of senility.

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⁽⁵⁾

- (1) *Swabhava*
- (2) *Jarapakvasharira due to kala*
- (3) *Dhatukshaya*
- (4) *Effect of dosha*
- (5) *Vayu*
- (6) *Abhighata*

Types of Rajonivrutti- *Ayurvedic* science has divided all diseases into 4 major types- *Agantuj, Sharira, Manas* and *Swabhavika*⁽⁶⁾. Concentrating on “*Swabhavika*” Type, it is described that this type includes all those conditions, which are naturally occurring. *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned a group of naturally occurring diseases under the heading of *Swabhavabalapravritta* includes *Kshudha* (Hunger), *Pipasa* (thirst), *Nidra* (sleep), *Jara* (aging) and *Mri-tyu* (Death)⁽⁷⁾. Although these disease are naturally occurring diseases, but sometimes they are being acquired also, which is described as “*Doshaja*” So they are further divided into two types- *Kala krita & Akalakrita*. In the some manners, *Rajonivrutti* too 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*
3. ***Kalaja Rajonivrutti-*** If *Rajonivrutti* occurs at its probable age (i.e. around

50 year of age) it is called as *Kalaja-Rajonivrutti*. According to *Aacharya Sushruta*, the timely *Rajonivrutti* (i.e. natural diseases like aging) occurs only when the protective measurements of healthcare being practiced. This condition is *Yapya* by *Rasayana*.

4. ***Akalaja Rajonivrutti-*** If *Rajonivrutti* occurs before or after its probable age (i.e. around 50 years) it is termed as *Akalaja Rajonivrutti*.

Menopausal symptoms in Ayurveda (*Rajonivrutti* and *bandhlakshan*)⁽⁸⁾-

a) *Vata* dominant menopausal symptoms-

dryness in vagina, extremities get cold, difficulty in getting sleep, mild to variable hot flushes (Invariable), anxiety, panic, nervousness, mood swings, dry skin, palpitations, bloating and constipation

b) *Pitta* dominant menopausal symptoms-

Angry, irritable, excess hot flushes, night sweats, extremely heavy periods with burning sensation, skin rashes, associated complaints such as UTI (urinary track infection).

c) *Kapha* dominant menopausal symptoms-

Weight gain, heavy, lethargy, depression, lack of motivation, hormonal changes such as Thyroid malfunction, fibrocystic changes in uterus or in the breast and excessive fluid retention.

Ayurvedic Management For Menopausal Syndrome:-

Most of the Menopause Symptoms are due the *Vata* aggravation followed by other *Doshic* factors. The basic concept of *Ayurvedic* medicine is “*Swasthyswas-tyarakshanam* and *aturasyavikaraprasamanam cha*” prevention is better than cure. In the early pre- menopause stage it is better to balance the aggravated or underplay-

ing factors, so that the intensity of the menopause symptoms will be far less or even can be negligible. In order to achieve this one should follow the *Dosha* based diet and life style principles followed by *Ayurvedic* herbs on regular basis. If still symptoms persists, it better toundergo “*Panchakarma*”(Ayurvedic detoxification), which helps in the elimination of vitiated humours or *Doshas* to bring them to balanced stage, then it is advisable to take few *Ayurvedic* herbs or decoctions and other preparation to make the transition more graceful.*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/samshodhantherapy*),*Sattvavjayachikitsa*,*Yogatherapy*,*Rasayana therapy*.

1. Ayurvedic diet and herbs-

(a) For 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* (*Withaniasomnifera*), *Arjuna* (*Terminaliaarjuna*), *Cardamom* (*Elettariacardomam*), *Garlic* (*Allium sativum*),*Guggul* (*Commiphoramukul*), *Sandalwood* (*Santalum alba*)and *Zizphus* (*ziziphusjube*).

(b)For 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 - *Al-oevera*, *Arjuna*(*Terminaliaarjuna*), *Amla* (*Emblicaofficinalis*), *Saffron*(*crocus sativus*), *Sandalwood* and Use spices such as *cinnamon*, *cardamom* and *fennel*.

(c)For Kapha Dominant Menopause-

Diet – Prefer light, dry and warm food, Consume fruits, whole grains, legumes, 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*, *Guggul*(*Commiphoramukul*), *Mustard*(*Brassicianigra*),*Haritki* (*Terminaliachebula*), *Nagarmotha* (*Cyperusrotundus*).

1. ***Samshamana Therapy-*** *Agnideepana*, *Amapachana*,*Anulomana*,*Balya* ,

2. ***SattvavjayaChikitsa-counselling and Reassurance***

3. ***Panchkarma therapy-Panchkarmachikitsa*** are physical therapies that thoroughly cleanse and purify the physical and mental impurities from the body and mind. The general purpose ofthe*Panchakarma* therapies is to loosen,liquefy and remove the vitiated substances and *Doshas* from their abnormal sites in peripheral tissues via their natural pathway of elimination. More serious symptoms, Use

such as frequent hot flashes, continual sleep disturbance, and moderate to severe mood swings, are signs of deeper imbalances. *Ayurveda* describes that these stubborn symptoms are usually due to the build-up of wastes and toxins, referred to as "Aama," in the body's tissues. In this case, a traditional *Ayurvedic* detoxification programme "*Panchakarma*" may be needed to clear the body's channels and gain relief. This internal cleansing approach is also the treatment of choice for more serious problems such as osteoporosis and high cholesterol. *Panchakarma*-
Abhyanga(Massage),*Mriduswedana*,*Shirodhara*,*MriduVirechan*,*Basti*

4. **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 brings 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* – *Shavasana*,*Padmasana*,*Varjāsana*

Pranayama –*SheetaliPranayama*,*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 terms of decrease risk of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance & loss of bone mineral density as well as improved psychological well being, sleep patterns & emotional modulation.

5. **Rasayana Therapy**-*Rasayana therapy* is not only preventing the aging

changes, but it brings in youthfulness 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⁽⁹⁾. *Aacharya Charaka* has described "*Rasayana*" as a means to promote vigour and health which is mainly virilific and promotive of vitality⁽⁹⁾. *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⁽¹⁰⁾

Many drugs act as *Rasayana* properly-

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 (*Withania 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 (*Glycyrrhiza 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 *Medhyarasyanas* namely *Sankhpushpi*, *Mandukaparni*, *Guduchi*, and *Yastimadhu*.⁽¹¹⁾ Such *medhyarasyana* 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. *Ayurveda* has excellent solution for a safe and happy transition into menopause. The basic concept of *Ayurvedic* medicine is “*Swasthysyaswastyarakshanam* and *aturasyavikaraprasamanam*” prevention is better than cure. *Panchkarma* therapy (such as *Shirodhara* & *Basti*), *Yoga* therapy & *Rasayan* therapy (*Chyavanprash* & *bramhrasayan*) and *Medhya Rasayana* is very beneficial for graceful menopause.

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Source of support: Nil
Conflict of interest: None Declared