

A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO MENOPAUSAL SYNDROME WITH AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

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. Not every woman passes through a torrid time during this phase, but every female surely knows about the negative changes associated with the onset of menopause. Hot flushes, lack of energy, vaginal dryness, irregular periods, backache, depression, etc., are some of the symptoms which may accompany this stage due to the changes in hormonal activity. In Ayurveda, the context of Menopause is depicted as "*Jara Pakva Avastha*" of body and *Rajo Nivrutti*. According to *Acharya* 50 years is mentioned as the age of *Rajonivrutti*. According to *Jara Rog Chikitsa-sutra Rasayana* is the way to combat symptoms associated with *Jara*. The term *Rasayana* refers to the means of obtaining the optimum nourishment for the *Rasadi Dhatus*. Other than this *Panchakarma* therapy, some Ayurvedic formulation, regular exercise, practicing meditation and yoga may overcome the symptoms of menopausal syndrome.

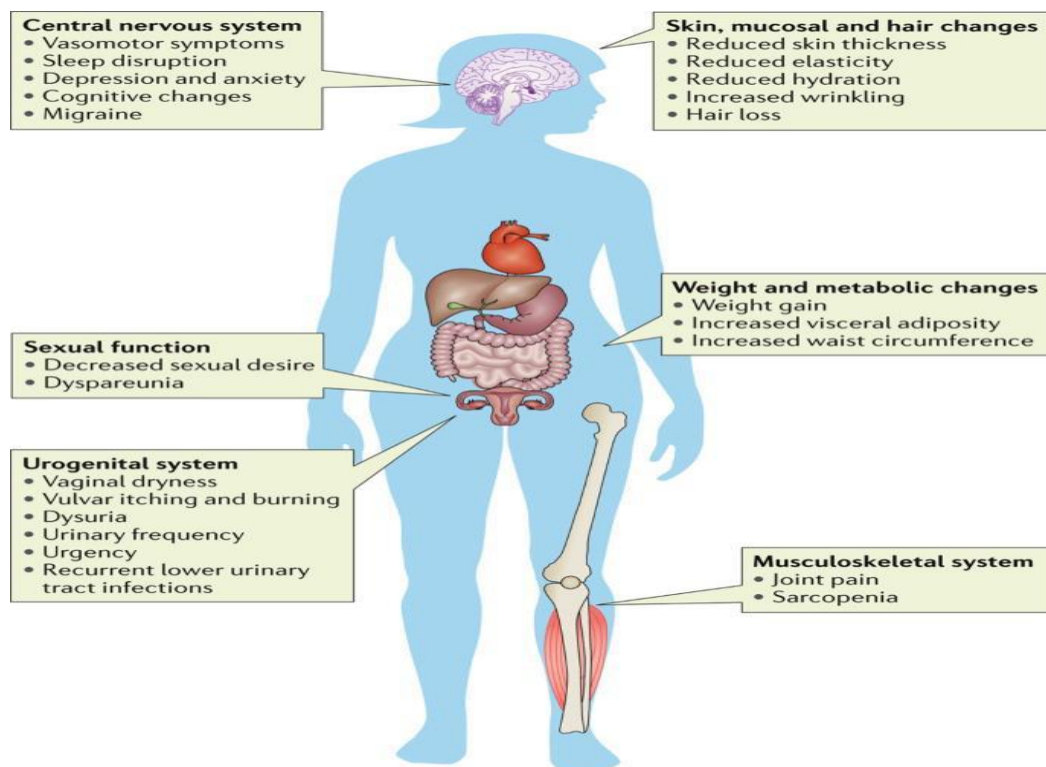
Keywords: *Rajonivrutti*, Menopause, Osteoporosis, *Rasayana*, *Panchakarma*

INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization and Stages of Reproductive Aging Workshop (STRAW) defined menopause as the permanent cessation of menstrual periods that occur naturally or are induced by surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation. Natural menopause is recognized after 12 consecutive months without menstrual periods that are not associated with a physiologic or pathologic cause.⁽¹⁾ Currently, the number of menopausal women is about 43 million and projected figures in 2026 have been estimated to be 103 million.⁽²⁾ According to Indian Menopause Society (IMS) research, there are about 65 million Indian women over the age of 45 and this figure is expected to creep up.⁽³⁾ Menopause normally occurs between the ages of 45 and 50 years, the average age being 47 years. It is not uncommon, however, to see a woman menstruate well beyond the age of 50. This delayed menopause may be related to good nutrition and better health. Late menopause is also common in women suffering from uterine fibroids and

those at high risk of endometrial cancer.⁽⁴⁾ The age of menopause is not related to the age of menarche or age at last pregnancy. However, cigarette smoking and severe malnutrition may cause early menopause.⁽⁵⁾ Hot flushes, lack of energy, vaginal dryness, irregular periods, backache, depression, etc., are some of the symptoms which may accompany this stage due to the changes in hormonal activity. The whole term *Rajonivrutti* means "End of *Aartva Pravrutti*" or "Cessation of menstruation." *Rajonivruttijanya Lakshana* is a group of symptoms produced by the degenerative process of body tissue. Degenerative changes are explained in Ayurveda as *Dhatukshaya Lakshana*. To combat the degenerative process of the body tissue *Acharya* has described *Rasayana Chikitsa*. *Rasayana* includes drugs that promote longevity and improve the quality of life. Some *Panchakarma* therapy also helps in reducing the symptoms of menopausal syndrome.

Modern Aspect of Menopause



Menopause is defined retrospectively as the time of the final menstrual period, followed by 12 months of amenorrhea. Post-menopause describes the period following the final menses. ⁽⁶⁾ Menopause means permanent cessation of menstruation at the end of reproductive life due to loss of ovarian follicular activity. It is the point time when the last and final menstruation occurs. It takes 12 months of amenorrhea to confirm menopause. Causes of the menopause include- ⁽⁷⁾

- **Naturally declining reproductive hormones.**
- **Surgery that removes the ovaries (oophorectomy)** - Surgical removal of both ovaries also called a bilateral oophorectomy, puts a woman into menopause right away. She will no longer have periods, and hormones decline rapidly.
- **Chemotherapy and radiation therapy** -Cancer chemotherapy or pelvic radiation therapy for reproductive system cancers can cause ovarian damage. The younger a woman is, the less likely she will go into menopause.
- **Primary ovarian insufficiency**- About 1% of women experience menopause before age 40 (premature menopause). Premature menopause may result from the failure of your ovaries to produce normal levels of reproductive hormones (primary ovarian insufficiency), which can stem from genetic factors or autoimmune disease.

Symptoms of menopause are collectively called Menopausal Syndrome. It includes the following symptoms: - ⁽⁴⁾ ⁽⁵⁾

1. Vasomotor symptoms
2. Urogenital atrophy
3. Psychological changes
4. Osteoporosis and fracture
5. Skin and Hair
6. Dementia
7. Cardiovascular disease and Cerebrovascular disease

Early Features of Menopause

- **Vasomotor symptoms**- Hot Flashes - Hot flush is characterized by a sudden feeling of heat followed by profuse sweating. Hot flushes are the waves of vasodilation affecting the face and the neck and these last for 2–5 min each. There may also be the

symptoms of palpitation, fatigue, and weakness. Estrogen deficiency reduces hypothalamic endorphins, which release more norepinephrine and serotonin. This leads to an inappropriate heat loss mechanism. Sleep may be disturbed due to night sweats. Mental depression due to disturbed sleep or otherwise, irritability, and lack of concentration are noticed.

- **Urogenital atrophy:** -Estrogen plays an important role to maintain the epithelium of the vagina, urinary bladder, and urethra. Estrogen deficiency produces atrophic epithelial changes in these organs.
- **Urinary Tract:** - Estrogen deficiency can cause urethral caruncle, dysuria, with or without infection, urge, and stress incontinence. Stress incontinence is caused by poor vascularity and tone of the internal urinary sphincter.
- **Genital** - Atrophic vagina reduces vaginal secretion, and a dry vagina can cause dyspareunia. Loss of libido adds to sexual dysfunction. Rarely, senile vaginitis can cause vaginal bleeding). Prolapse of the genital tract and stress incontinence of urine and feces are mostly menopausal related.
- **Psychological changes:** There is an increased frequency of anxiety, headache, insomnia, irritability dysphasia, and depression. They also suffer from dementia, mood swing, and inability to concentrate. Estrogen increases opioid (neurotransmitter) activity in the brain and is known to be important for memory.

Late Sequel of Menopause

1. **Osteoporosis and fracture:** - About 15% of elderly women suffer from osteoporosis and almost three times as many suffer from osteopenia (deficient bone mass menopause there is a decline in collagenous bone matrix resulting in osteoporotic changes. Bone mass loss and microarchitectural deterioration of bone tissue occur primarily in trabecular bone (vertebra, distal radius) and cortical bones. Osteoporosis may lead to back pain, loss of height, and kyphosis. Fracture of bones is a major health problem. The fracture may involve the

vertebral body, femoral neck, or distal forearm (Colles' fracture).

2. **Skin and Hair Changes**-Estrogen receptors are present in the skin and maximum are present in the facial skin. Estrogen replacement can prevent this skin loss during menopause. After menopause, there is thinning, loss of elasticity, and wrinkling of the skin. Skin collagen content and thickness decrease by 1–2% per year. "Purse string" wrinkling around the mouth and "crow feet" around the eyes.
3. **Dementia**: Lately, it is reported that Alzheimer's disease is precipitated by estrogen deficiency at menopause, and hormonal therapy is beneficial in preventing or delaying its onset.
4. **Cardiovascular and cerebrovascular effects**: Estrogen is cardioprotective by maintaining a high level of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and lowering the low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and triglyceride. Oxidation of LDL and foam cell formation causes vascular endothelial injury, cell death, and smooth muscle proliferation. All of these lead to vascular atherosclerotic changes, vasoconstriction, and thrombus formation. Risks of ischemic heart disease, coronary artery disease, and strokes are increased.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) therapy is used to treat menopause means to relieve the discomfort and disorder due to hormone deficiency and at the same time ward off degenerative processes of old age or at least mitigate their effects and slow down their rate of advance. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) solves only half of the problem and also increases the risk of secondary health complications like vaginal bleeding,

breast cancer, endometrial cancer, gallbladder diseases, etc.

Ayurvedic Aspect of Menopause

In Ayurveda, the context of Menopause is depicted as "*Jara Pakva Avastha*" of body and *Rajonivrutti*. According to *Acharya Sushrut*, 50 years is mentioned as the age of *Rajonivrutti*.⁽⁸⁾ The term '*Rajonivrutti*' is made up of two different words viz. "*Rajah*" and "*Nivrutti*". *Rajah* means *Aartva* or menstruation and *Nivrutti* means *Apravrutti* or cessation. The whole term *Rajonivrutti* means "*End of Aartva Pravrutti*" or "Cessation of menstruation"

Probable Samprapti of Rajonivrutti

There is no specific description regarding clinical features of *Rajonivrutti* as Ayurveda considers *Rajonivrutti* as a natural change in the body. In the Old age, *Vatadosha* is dominated, this dominant *Vatadosha* affects the female body. The dominant *Vata Dosh*a especially with *Laghu* and *Ruksha Guna* results in a reduction in *Dravata* of *Rasa dhatu*. This further leads to *Dhatukshya* starting from *Rasa Dhatu*, further respective *Updhutu Kshaya* takes place. Thus, leading to *Aartav Nasha* (amenorrhea). The vitiated *Vata Dosh*a also disturbs the other *Sharir* as well as *Manas Dosh*a (*Raja* and *Tama Dosh*a) leading to various psychological disturbances. Thus, according to Ayurveda, we can make a correlation between the different menopausal symptoms seen in the body. Various factors can be considered as the causative factors for *Rajonivrutti*.

Ayurveda Constitution and Dosh's in Menopause

Menopauses are wide, and these symptoms vary with each *Dosh*a and express their own physiological and psychological symptomology which can be classified according to *Doshic* theory as follows.⁽⁹⁾

Vata Dosh a	<i>Vata</i> imbalance disturbs the nervous system and emaciates bodily tissues by its <i>Ruksha</i> , <i>Laghu</i> & <i>Sheeta</i> properties. Hence in <i>Vata</i> dominated menopause, females are prone to <i>Yoni Shushkhat</i> a (Vaginal dryness), <i>Vali</i> (Wrinkling of skin), <i>Katishoola</i> (Low backache), <i>Sandhi Vedana</i> (joints pain), <i>Vibandha</i> (Constipation), <i>Hastapadasupti</i> (Numbness), Along with these; feeling <i>Anidra/Alpanidra</i> (Insomnia), <i>Bhrama</i> (Vertigo), <i>Anavasthita Chitatvam</i> (Mood swing), <i>Vaichitya</i> (Loss of concentration), <i>Vishaada</i> (<u>Depression</u>), <i>Chinta</i> (<u>Anxiety</u>), <i>Smritivardhana</i> (Decreased memory), etc.
Pitta Dosh a	<i>Atisweda</i> (Sweating), <i>Osha</i> (Hot flushes), <i>Marsha</i> (Irritability), <i>Yoni Daha</i> (Burning sensation), <i>Yoni Daurgandhya</i> (Foul-smelling), <i>Mutravaha</i> (Burning sensation in Urine), etc.
Kapha Dosh a	<i>Atisthau</i> laya (Weight gain), <i>Yoni Kandu</i> (Itching), <i>Yoni Srava</i> (Vaginal discharge), etc.

Saptadhatukshay during Menopause

In old age, *Saptadhatukshay* is interpreted as degenerative changes in tissue that causes various effects on the female body. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Rasakshay	In <i>Rasakshay</i> various symptoms can be seen like <i>Shabda Asahtva</i> , <i>Hridravata</i> , <i>Shool</i> , <i>Shrama</i> , <i>Shosha</i> , and <i>Trusha</i> . (Irritability, generalized weakness can be seen).
Raktakshay	In old age due to <i>Dhatukshay</i> , <i>Updhutu Aartav</i> formation also gets suppressed which results in <i>Rajonivrutti</i> , <i>Twakrukshata</i> , and <i>Sirashaitihilyata</i> . (Dryness of skin, cessation of menses).
Mansakshay	<i>Sphilgandadishushkata</i> , <i>Toda</i> , <i>Rukshata</i> , <i>Glani</i> , <i>Sandhi Sphutan</i> , <i>Sandhi Vedana</i> , and <i>Dhamani Shaithilya</i> is seen. (Loss of tone and elasticity of the skin can be seen in that condition).
Medokshay	<i>Angarukshata</i> , <i>Shrama</i> , <i>Shosha</i> , <i>Krushta</i> is seen (dryness of skin, weakness, cachexia can be seen).
Asthikshay	<i>Asthikshay</i> and <i>Sandhi Shaithilya</i> occur in <i>Asthidhatu kshay</i> . (Arthritis and osteoporosis occur in this condition).
Majjakshay	<i>Asthi Ushirya</i> , <i>Asthi Toda</i> , <i>Dourbalya</i> , <i>Bhrama</i> , <i>Tamah Darshan</i> , <i>Sandhi Shunyatva</i> . (Mood swings and depression occur sometimes).
Shukrashay	<i>Yonivedana</i> , <i>Shrama</i> , <i>Dourbalya</i> , <i>Panduta</i> . (Dyspareunia, loss of libido).

Chikitsa: According to *Jara Rog Chikitsasutra Rasayana* is the way to combat symptoms associated with *Jara*. The term *Rasayana* refers to the means of obtaining the optimum nourishment for the *Rasadi Dhatus*. Thus, the *Rasayana* is a specialized type of treatment influencing the *Dhatus*, *Agnis*, and *Strotas* of the body leading to an overall improvement in the formation and maintenance of the living tissues and helps in the

prevention of aging, improving resistance against diseases, bodily strength and process of improving mental faculties Daily consumption of ghee, milk, which increase *Kapha* can delay the onset of menopause. ⁽¹¹⁾ Other than this *Panchakarma* therapy, some Ayurvedic formulation, regular exercise practice meditation, and yoga may overcome the symptoms of menopausal syndrome.

Dravya

Name of Drug	Effect
Shatavari	Its natural phytoestrogens and so can be used as an alternative to synthetic HRT, gently and naturally rebalancing estrogen levels. It is filled with isoflavonoids, antioxidants, fibers, and vitamins. <i>Shatavari</i> may alleviate an aggravated <i>Vata</i> and <i>Pitta Dosha</i> 's, so it helps in treating hot flashes, depression, memory loss, and sleep disorders like symptoms associated with increased <i>Pitta</i> and <i>Vata</i> .
Shatapushpa	This herb has anti-inflammatory properties that help in reducing swelling and pain around joints. <i>Shatapushpa</i> helps relieve vaginal dryness symptoms during menopause.
Ashwagandha	It's an adaptogen and a tonic, as it both calms the stress response and builds energy. It's particularly helpful for mental strength and supporting restorative sleep.
Bala	<i>Bala</i> helps in managing weight by suppressing appetite and decreasing the urge to overeat and its antioxidant property also helps to protect the heart cells against free radical damage and manages blood pressure by preventing constriction of blood vessels.
Chandrasur	It helps to maintain the proper production of <i>Ojus</i> by nourishing <i>Dhatus</i> in the body.
Arjuna	It is an herb touted for its ability to augment heart functions, thus helping women preserve normal blood pressure and averting cardiac ailments.
Amlaki	<i>Amla</i> pacifies <i>Vata</i> , <i>Pitta</i> , and <i>Kapha</i> , though it is especially calming to <i>Pitta</i> . It is also a tonic for the heart, the arterial system, the sense organs, and the mind and also prevent hyperlipidemia. It promotes healthy skin.
Guggulu	The gum resin extracted from the potent <i>Guggulu</i> herb is a remarkable therapeutic method to shed excess kilos for women undergoing menopause.

Panchakarma

Panchakarma	Effect
Abhyanga	Daily massage therapy is designed to loosen and mobilize the toxins which help in opening up all the channels. This therapy provides relaxation and helps in improving sleep, and mood swings, and keeps the mind relax.
Shirodhara	Pouring herbal oil or decoction over the scalp is an effective therapy for calming the nervous system and balancing the neurotransmitters. It helps to relieve all the negativity, worries, mental junk, etc.
Nasya	Medicated herbal oil given through the nasal route helps with the symptoms of the mind.
Basti	Medicated enemas (<i>Basti</i>) are administered for calming down the aggravated <i>Vata Dosha</i> and <i>Apana Vata</i> which become disordered during menopause

Kalpa

For the symptoms of a menopausal syndrome some *Kalpa* is mentioned in the table below. ⁽¹²⁾

Symptoms	Name of <i>Kalpa</i> (oral)	Panchakarma
Hot flushes / night sweats	<i>Praval Pishti, Chandan Asava, Kamdudha Rasha.</i>	<i>Dhanvantara Taila Basti</i>
Insomnia/mood swing	<i>Brahmi Vati, Brahma Rasayana</i>	<i>Shirodhara with Yashtimadhu Kashaya with milk</i>
Osteoporosis	<i>Asthishrinkhala Churna, Kukkutand Tvak Put Bhasma</i>	<i>Lakshadi. taila, Dhanvantari taila Basti</i>
Debility	<i>Shatavari Churna, Ashwagandha Churna,</i>	

Pathya -Apathya

During menopause, patients should follow these *Pathya-Apathya*. ⁽¹³⁾

Pathya	Apathya
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regular exercise strengthens. Bones increase well-being and induce good sleep. ➤ Practice meditation and yoga. ➤ Stick to warm foods and drinks, maintain regular meal patterns and use spices such as fennel, ginger, cinnamon, fenugreek, and cumin in food. ➤ Include milk and milk products and add a lot of fruits and vegetables to the diet to supplement calcium, iron, vitamins, and minerals. ➤ Lose weight if overweight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Excessive intake of salt, chilies, spices, sour foods, and pickles. ➤ Intake of caffeine and other stimulants, refined sugar, junk food, cold and carbonated drinks. ➤ Quits smoking and alcohol can be harmful at this stage.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda and modern medicine have basic epistemological differences. Ayurvedic wisdom and logic are more health-oriented than disease-oriented. In Ayurveda special branch of *Rasayana* is explained, which is life-promoting and deals with the aging problems, to improve health as well as longevity. The symptoms occurring in menopausal syndrome-like; sleep disturbance, irritability, hot flushes, etc. can co-relate with *Vata Pittaja Lakshana*. As *Rajonivrutti* deals with

Jara Avastha, Rasayana therapy is the line of treatment for the prevention of longer-term effects of depletion of *Dhatu*s. From the above theory, we can conclude that various Ayurvedic drugs have properties of *Rasayana, Vata pitta Shamana Kapha Vardhan* along with *Panchakarma*, a balanced diet, Yoga, meditation can be helpful for the management of the menopausal syndrome.

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Padubidri VG (2010) Howkinsand Bourne, Shaw's a Textbook of Gynaecology. Menopause, Published by ELSEVIER, Amsterdam. p. 556. According to Indian Menopause Society (IMS) research, there are about 65 million Indian women over the age of 45 and this figure is expected to creep up. The average age of Menopause in around 48 years but it strikes Indian women as young as 30-35 years [1]AdvertisementIn the present era women have a multidimensional attitude and

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