

“ROLE OF AYURVEDA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MENOPAUSAL SYNDROME VS HRT”-A REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda terms aging as *Vradhhavastha* (old age) or *Jirna* (degeneration), signified by *Kshaya* (decay). Objective of *Ayurveda* is to accomplish physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being by adopting preventive and promotive approaches as well as treating disease with a holistic approach. Menopausal syndrome does not find mention as disease in *Ayurvedic* literature, the reason could be women at that time belonged to a society which had *Ayurveda* as its health standard. They entered in old age as *kalaja vridhhavastha* (timely aging) and *Rajonivritti* (menopause) occurring at about age of 50 years passed uneventful.

According to contemporary medical science, this physiological transition from reproductive to post reproductive life is associated with decline in estrogen levels. Over time, this decline may be experienced as a change in the skin elasticity, altered cognitive abilities, hot flushes or flashes, night sweats, menstrual irregularities, and vaginal dryness. Other symptoms, such as depression, nervous tension, palpitations, headaches, insomnia, lack of energy, difficulty concentrating, and dizzy spells are also reported. Osteoporosis is most prevalent in women over the age of 50 as the hormonal influence of estrogen on bone health dissipates with the onset of menopause. To treat the menopause means to relieve the discomfort and disorder due to hormone deficiency and at the same time to ward off degenerative processes of old age or at least to mitigate their effects and slow down their rate of advance. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) solves only half of the problem but to provide optimum physical and mental fitness *Ayurveda* is the better option for healthy long life.

Keywords: Menopause, Rajonivritti, Dhatu kshaya, kalaja vridhhavastha.

Introduction:

In *Ayurveda*, Menopause condition is termed as ‘*Rajonivritti*’ (and menopausal syndrome as *Rajonivrittianubandhajavyadhies*). 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), Rasayantheapyand Yoga therapy.*

- **Cause of Menopause¹-**

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 symptoms²-**

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

- **Ayurvedic view for Menopause-** In Ayurvedic classics Menopause condition is termed as “*Rajonivrutti & Menopausal symptoms (Rajonivrutti anubandhyadhies)*” The whole term *Rajonivrutti* means end of *Artava Pravritti* or cessation of menstruation.

- ***Rajonivrutti Kala (Age of Menopause)***

:Though *Rajonivrutti* as a diseased condition is not described separately in the classic, *Rajonivrutti kala* is mentioned by almost all *Aacharya* without any controversy According to *Sushruta* and various other references (*Astanga Hridayam*) 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*

Menopausal symptoms in Ayurveda:

- **(*Rajoniviruttianubandhlakshan*) (6)-**

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 tract 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 “*Swasthasya swastyarakhshanam and aturasya vikaraprasamanam cha*” prevention is better than cure. In the early pre-menopause stage it is better to balance the aggravated or underlying 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 persist, it is better to undergo “*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 decoction* 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/samshodhan therapy)*, *Sattvavajayachikitsa*, *Yogotherapy*, *Rasayan 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 (Withania somnifera)*, *Arjuna (Terminalia arjuna)*, *Cardamom (Elettaria cardamom)*, *Garlic (Allium sativum)*, *Guggul (Commiphora mukul)*, *Sandalwood (Santalum alba)* and *Zizphus (ziziphus jube)*.

(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 drink , 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.

(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(Brassicanigra), 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 of the *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, such as frequent hot flashes, 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, Shiro dhara, MriduVirechan, Basti*

4. Yoga therapy

5. Rasayana Therapy^{7,8}-Triphala:-Triphala consisting of Haritaki (Terminaliachebula), Vibhitaki (Termanaliabellerica), Amalaki (Embelicaofficianalis), pacify all the three *Doshas* & also is an excellent *Vayasthapana (anti-aging agent)*

Ashwagandha(Withanasomnifera)- 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(Glycerrhizaglabra)- 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*

- DISCUSSION**

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. During the period of menopause the

women enters an estrogen deficient phase which leads to the various symptoms. This period is generally associated with manifestation of aging process in women. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is the only alternative available for menopausal syndrome in modern medicine. It also has a wide range of side effects on the body of the female. While hormone therapy (HT) helps many women get through menopause, the treatment (like any prescription or even non-prescription medicines) is not risk-free. Known health risks include: An increased risk of endometrial cancer (*only if you still have your uterus and are not taking a progestin along with estrogen*). Increased risk of blood clots and stroke. Increased chance of gallbladder/gallstone problems. Increased risk of dementia if hormone therapy is started after midlife. HT started during midlife is associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Increased risk of breast cancer with long-term use. 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 that *Pitta dosha* symptoms like hot flushes, irritability, etc are seen, during this phase. Degenerative changes are explained in Ayurveda as *Dhatukshaya lakshana*. *Sushruta Acharya* has explained that there is *Shareera-shithilta* in *Vrudha-avastha* (old age) and women attains *Rajonivritti* stage at around 50 years. This age is dominated by *Vatadosha*, this dominant *Vatadosha* affects the female body.[5] The dominant *Vata dosha* specially with *Laghu* and *Ruksha guna* results in reduction in *Dravata* of *Rasa dhatu*. This further leads to *Dhatukshya* starting from *Rasa dhatu*, further respective *Updhatu kshaya* takes place. Thus leading to *Artava nasha* (amenorrhea). The vitiated *Vata dosha* also disturbs the other *Sharir* as well as *Manas dosha* (*Raja* and *Tama dosha*) leading to various psychological disturbances.

- To combat the degenerative process of the body tissue *Acharyas* have described *Rasayana Chikitsa*. *Rasayana* includes drugs which promotes longevity and improve the quality of life and correcting *Dosha imbalance* with appropriate diet, *samshamana therapy*, *internal detoxification* (*panchakarma therapy/samshodhanthearpy*), *Sattvavjayachikitsa*, *Yogatherapy*.

Conclusion:

To treat the menopause means to relieve the discomfort and disorder due to hormone deficiency and at the same time to ward off degenerative processes of old age or at least to mitigate their effects and slow down their rate of advance. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) solves only half of the problem but to provide optimum physical and mental fitness Ayurveda is the better option for healthy long life.

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