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 Rajonivruttianubandhajavyadhis). 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), Rasayanthearypyand Yoga therapy.

Keyword: Menopause, Rajonivrutti, Rasayan, Yoga, Dhatukshaya
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.

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 maturity 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 (Rajonivruttianubandhayadhyes) The whole term Rajonivrutt time 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 Acharya without any controversy.
According to Sushruta and various other references (AstangaHridayam)too50 years is mentioned as the age of Rajonirruti\(^3\)\(^4\)when the body is fully in grip of senility.

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

**Nidana of Rajonirruti:** The specific reasons for Rajonirruti 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. Abhigghata

**Types of Rajonirruti:** 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 Mrityu (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 man-ners, Rajonirruti too is a naturally occurring condition in every woman as that of Jaravashta etc. Swabhavika Vyadhies. So Rajonirruti also can be divided into two types:

1. Kalaja Rajonirruti
2. Akalaja Rajonirruti

**3. Kalaja Rajonirruti:** If Rajonirruti occurs at its probable age (i.e. around 50 year of age) it is called as Kalaja Rajonirruti. According to Acharaya Sushruta, the timely Rajonirruti (i.e.natural diseases like aging) occurs only when the protective measurements of healthcare being practiced. This condition is Yapya by Rasayana.

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

**Menopausal symptoms in Ayurveda (Rajonirruttianubandhlakshan)\(^8\):**

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 “Swasthyaswas- tyarakshanam and aturasyavikaraprasa- manam 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 lifestyle principles followed by Ayurvedic herbs on regular basis. If still symptoms persists, it 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 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/samshodhan therapy), Sattvavayachikitsa, Yogatherapy, 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 (Withaniasomnifera), Arjuna (Terminaliaarjuna), Cardamom (Elettariacardamom), Garlic (Allium sativum), Guggul (Commiphoramukul), Sandalwood (Santalum alba) and Ziziphus (ziziphusjujube).

(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 - Aloe vera, 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. Sattvavayachikitsa- 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 Panchkarma 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, 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.

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, Sama dhi. The most commonly performed yoga practices are postures (Aasana) controlling breathing (Pranayama) & Meditation (Dhyana) Aasana – Shavasana, Padmasana, 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 well being, sleep patterns & emotional modulation.

5. **Rasayana Therapy** - Rasayana therapy is not only preventing the aging changes, but it bring 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 AacharyaCharaka, 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. Aacharyacharaka has described “Rasayana” as a means to promote vigour and health which is mainly virilific and promotive of vitality. 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.

Many drugs act as Rasayana property -

**Triphala**: Triphala consisting of Haritaki (Terminalia chebula), Vibhitaki (Terminalia belerica), Amalaki (Emblica officinalis), pacify all the three Doshas & also is an excellent Vaya sthapana (anti-aging agent)

**Ashwagandha** (Withanasonnifera)-
- 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

MedhyaRasayana-The Ayurvedic texts describe certain rasayana drugs which specially influence the Medha and promote mental competence. Such rasayana are called as MedhyaRasayana. Aacharya Charak has described four Medhyarasayanas namely Sankhpushpi, Mandukaparni, Guduchi, and Yastimadhu.\(^{(1)}\) Such medhyarasayana 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 “Swasthyaswastyarakshanam and aturasyavikaraprasamanam” prevention is better than cure. Panchkarma therapy (such as Shirodhara & Basti), Yoga therapy & Rasayan therapy (Chyavanprash & bramhhrasayan) and MedhyaRasayana is very beneficial for graceful menopause.

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