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Menopause: Ayurvedic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The ancient ayurvedic acharyahave used term *rajonivritti*for menopause. Ayurvedconsiders that menopause is a natural condition inwomen's life. It is not a disease.*Acharya Sushruta* said that menstrual cycle starts at 12 years of the age and stops at the age of 50 years. There is no information available regarding its *purvarupa*, *rupa*, *Samprapti* and *nidana*.This natural phenomenon was not described as a disease and the cause was the healthy diet and lifestyle of women. But now days we have to take the cognizance of menopause as lot of women are getting the symptoms. As this population is large enough, they require medical care for various symptoms. Hormonal replacement therapy (HRT) has lots of side effects, less tolerance and gynecologists also hesitate to prescribe. So it is mandatory to explore concept of*rajonivrutti*(menopausal syndrome)mentioned in Ayurved and possible therapies. They haveleast or no adverse effects.

KEYWORDS

Rajonivritti, Menopause, Hormonal Replacement Therapy, Ayurved



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INTRODUCTION

History of menopause

Sushrutasamhita and *Astangahridayam* mentioned menopause as *rajonivritti* during 7th or 6th century BCE (some even speculate as early as 1000 BCE). The history of menopause goes back to eighteenth century. This term menopause was used in 1821 by a French physician¹. In the 1930's interest was developed among physicians and they used the term menopause as a deficiency disease². During year 1970 information on the pathogenesis of menopause was complete³.

In India, some 30-40 years back menopause was not noticed due to diet and lifestyle of women.

Menopause defined in modern science

World Health Organization and Stages of Reproductive Aging Workshop (STRAW) defined menopause as permanent stopping of menstrual cycle which occur naturally or due to removal of uterus by surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. Natural menopause can be considered after 12 continuous months without menstrual cycle without any physiological or pathological reason.

In artificial menopause uterus is removed by surgery or cancer associated radiation therapy⁴.

Menopause defined in Ayurvedic science

In the Classical Ayurvedic text, the *Astangahridayam*, it is said "Just as the lotus closes during end of the day, so also the yoni after the *rutukala* (the period suitable for conception); thereafter she will not be receptive for *sukra*⁵ (semen.)

In Sanskrit, *yonis* means place of birth, source or origin. In the *Charaka samhita*, diseases of the vagina are called *yonivyapat*⁶.

Modern Etymology

The word 'Menopause' has been adopted from the Greek word 'Menos' (month) & 'Pausis' (cessation).

Ayurvedic etymology

The ancient Acharya's termed it as a *rajonivritti*. This word '*rajonivritti*' is composed of two variable words "*rajah*" and "*nivritti*".

Sanskrit language says first word for "*rajah*" means to impart color any substance.

Also word *rajah* is used in Ayurved for following things like,

- a. *Artavaorstripushpa* (Menstrual blood)
- b. *Raja guna* (A type of Manasdosha-mental disorder)
- c. *Parag* (Pollen grains of flower)
- d. *Renu* (Minute dust particles)
- e. Other word of a plant called as *Parpata*

But here in this article the meaning of *rajah* is *artava* and *stripushpa*. The second word *nivritti* means *Apravritti*, *Upamana*,



Virati, *Vyparati* and *Uparati* according to Hemchandra.

The meaning of above mentioned words is discontinuation. Simply complete word *rajonivritti* means end of *artavapravritti* or stopping of menstrual cycle.

Age of menopause

Menopause is a natural phenomenon in life that occurs during the age of 40-50 years. There is a cessation of menstrual cycle which reduces hormone levels leads to condition called menopause.

Rajonivruttkala

Rajonivruttkala has been described by every *Acharyas*. *Acharya Sushruta* said that menstrual cycle starts during age of 12 years and stops during 50 years of age⁷. *Vagbhata*⁸ and *Bhavamishra* also have mentioned the same age for menarche and menopause.

Ayurveda considers aging *nishpratikriya*⁹ (change that cannot be resisted) and *swabhavabalroga* (natural diseases). *Rajonivritti* (menopause) occurring in *jarapakvashareer* (aged body) during 50 years of age¹⁰ coincides with mean age of menopause mentioned in modern science.

Diagnosis of menopause

1. Stopping of menstruation for twelve consecutive months during climacteric.
2. "hot flush" and "night sweat" found in female

3. Vaginal cytology – showing maturation index

4. Serum estradiol < 20 pg/ml

5. Serum FSH & LH > 40 mIU/ml (three value at weeks interval required)¹¹

Nidana of rajonivritti

No information is available regarding its *purvarupa*, *rupa*, *samprapti* and *nidana*. So *rajah utpattihetus* can be considered as *rajah nivrittihetus* also. Some specific factors¹² also can be considered as the causative factors enlisted below.

1. *Kala* (Time)
2. *Vayu* (*aapan and vyan*)
3. *Dhatukshaya* (Deficiency disorders)
4. *Swabhava* (Natural phenomenon)
5. *Karma* (Activities)
6. *Abhigat* (Injury)

1. Kala (Time)

Kala is present everywhere and is the key factor behind anything that occurs in the world. *kala* is a causative factor that leads to *mrityu* (Cha. Sha. 1/115), causes *garbhavridhi* (Cha. Sha. 2), reason behind *bala*, *taruna* and *vridhaavastha* (Cha. Vi. 8) etc. In Ayurveda, *kala* only decides the "vaya" (age). Hence "rajonivritti" is there during of 50 to 55 years in female.

2. Vayu (aapan and vyan)

"*Vayu*" as one of the *dosha* and causes every process in *sharir*. Ayurved considers five types of *vayu*. Out of these "*aapanavaya*"



and "vyanvayu" are determining the functions of aartava.

3. *Dhatukshaya* (Deficiency disorders)

Dhatu nourishes the body and holds whole body. *Dhatu* *paripurnatwa* is considered as a responsible factor for "rajah utpatti". For human being, reproduction is one of the *chaturvidh purusharth*, in *balyavastha* (childhood), this cannot be done because the *dhatu*s are not mature, and hence *rajah* and *shukra* are also not seen. But, in *tarunyaoryuvaavastha*, *dhatu* reaches the level of *paripurnatwa* or completeness and starts as *rajodarshana* (menarche), which marks the commencement of child bearing age female. The vice versa is also real during *rajonivritti*. As age advances; the condition of *dhatu* deteriorates day by day. Advanced age leads to *dhatukshaya*. As a result, *upadhatu aartava* is unable to synthesize, leading to *rajonivritti*.

Seven *dhatu*s are the basic tissue elements of the body. They are,

1. *Rasa* or chyle or plasma,
2. *Rakta* or the red-blood corpuscles,
3. *Mamsa* or muscle tissue,
4. *Medas* or fat/adipose tissue
5. *Asthi* or bone tissue,
6. *Majja* or bone marrow and
7. *Sukra, rajas*, sperm, ovum important for procreation.

In healthy state they remain in a equal proportion of wear & tear in the human body and any change in this equilibrium leads to disease and decay. Diseases are produced only when the *doshas* interact with these *dhatu*s and this happens only when there is disturbance in their equilibrium. If there is any change in the equilibrium of these *dhatu*s certain signs and symptoms may manifest in the body. *Dhatukshaya* is said to occur whenever the *dhatu*s or tissues become weak and show deficiency in their structure or function (tissue, organs or *strotas* / channels). In such condition vitiated *dosh* accumulates at the site where there is defect or malformation leading to disease. The example of such type of disorder is osteoarthritis. The *dhatukshaya* can also be interpreted as degeneration of tissues.

In *rasa dhatukshaya* - dry skin, graying of hairs or lusterless skin, mild or occasional vaginal dryness, feeling of weakness without physical work, lethargy and tiredness, lack of stamina can be manifested during menopause.

In *raktadhatu dhatukshaya* - severe hot flashes or frequent feeling of excessive heat, frequent or chronic skin rashes, acne may be manifested.

Mamsadhatu is the muscle tissue and it is depleted in a female as age advances during



menopause leads to muscular pain or easily fatigued muscles, very dry, cracking lips.

Medasdhatukshaya frequent night sweats or sweats during the day associated with hot flashes.

Asthidhatukshaya - Low bone density, hair breaking, problems with teeth (breaking easily having cavities), nails cracking frequently, constant joint pains or arthritic conditions, deep pains in the bones. During menopause, *asthiagni* becomes hyperactive because the body produces less estrogen. During estrogen deficiency, *asthiagni* becomes hyperactive in an effort to compensate for that lack of estrogen which results into osteoporosis. If women eat *vata* provoking diet it will aggravate osteoporotic changes.

Majjadhatukshaya leads to frequent or recurring infections, unable to concentrate, recurrent tendonitis, frequent feeling of fainting or giddiness.

Shukradhatu & artava updhatukshaya - *Artavavahastrotas* (female reproductive system) includes fallopian tubes, ovaries, uterus, cervix, vulva and vaginal passage. The functions of *artavavahastrotas* include menstruation, ovulation and conception.

The cessation of *artava* happens during menopause due to the *kshya* of this *updhatu*. *Artavasupdhatu* is the ovum and its supportive tissues lost in menopause resulting in end of reproductive life,

absence of libido (less sex drive), severe vaginal dryness, absence of sexual attractiveness & affection, dull & unclear eyes. Overall depletion of *dhatu*s will certainly amount to the low level of *ojasin* the body and it will invite many problems which are naturally prevented by its proper status.

4. *Swabhava* (Natural phenomenon)

It is an innate incidence which is inevitable. *Acharya Sushruta* beautifully postulated some of innate conditions categorized as *swabhavabalapravritta* includes *kshudha* (hunger), *pipasa* (thirst), *nidra* (sleep), *jara* (aging) and *mrityu* (death)¹³. It is a *swabhava* (natural tendency) of body to degrade every moment. *Rajah* is physiological process, lead to a *rajonivritti*. *Swabhavoparamvada* (Theory of natural destruction) says a substance, will be evolved and will be destroyed naturally. Similarly *rajah* will be appeared and destroyed at a particular age termed as *rajonivritti*¹⁴.

5. *Karma* (Activities)

It is like action and reaction. We are bound to get the reaction to our action. *Karma* is considered by two ways. First is *purvajanmakruta* (effects of previous birth) and other is, *ajanmakruta* (*karma* of this life). The first is causes lot of things, because ayurved considers concept of



aatma(soul) and *punarjanama*(rebirth). There is also *karana* and *karya*, which includes all the *pragyaparadhas*(intellectual blasphemy) for diseased condition.

Acharya Charaka explained things that lead to growth. These include *kalayoga* (time opportunity), *swabhavasansiddha* (favorable disposition of the nature), *aharasaushthava* (good quality food) and *avighata*(absence of suppressing things). Person has good health if these four factors are favorable. Also environmental *aharaja*(dietary) and *viharaja*(lifestyle) factors influence *rajonivritti*. Acharya Charaka has believed man will lose his strength, luster, vital capacity, stamina without any cause in advance to time due to *mithya*(incompatible) *ahara* and *vihara*. These some *nidanas*(causative factors) are the causes for *akalajarajoniuritti* (early menopause). So inference can be made that few favorable and unfavorable incidences lead *rajonivrutti*. It is little for imagination that a woman living under unfavorable conditions is likely to develop aging earlier and gets *rajonivrutti* also earlier.

6. Abhighat (Injury)

Following factors may contribute early menopause.

a. Stress, strain & mental tension leads to early menopause.

b. Medical treatments such as chemotherapy & radiation can initiate menopause earlier than usual

c. Drinking of alcohol may cause early entering into the phase of menopause

d. Poor nutrition & poverty

e. Smoking increases risk of early menopause

f. Surgery that removes both ovaries

Types of *rajonivritti* mentioned in Ayurved

Ayurveda has divided all diseases into four major types. They are *agantu*(external influence), *sharira*(physical problems or disorders), *manas*(mental problems) and *swabhavika*(natural) according to Sushrut¹⁵ *sutrasthana*. *Swabhavika*

(natural) type includes all naturally occurring phenomenon such as *kshudha*(hunger), *pipasa* (thirst), *nidra* (sleep), *jara* (aging) and *mrityu* (death) mentioned in Sushrut *samhita*. Although these conditions are natural, sometimes they are acquired, can be described as "*doshaja*". Thus can be further divided into two types, *kalakrita*(as per time schedule or timely) and *akalakrita*(untimely).

Similarly *rajonivrutti* too is a naturally occurring condition in every woman as *swabhavika*(natural) due to *jarawastha*(senility or ageing). Hence *rajonivritti* can be classified into two types



viz. *kalaja* (as per time schedule or timely) and *akalaj*(untimely).

a. Kalaja

If *rajonivrutti* happens at particular age mentioned in text it is termed as *kalajarajonivrutti*. It is a natural phenomenon. This is possible when women follows *dincharya* and *druticharya* (protective measurements of healthcare).

b. Akalaja

If *rajonivrutti* occurs before or after its probable age mentioned in text it is termed as *akalajarajonivrutti*. *Akalajarajonivrutti* is possible when women neglect *dincharya* and *druticharya* (protective measurements of healthcare). As this phenomenon is not natural it should be treated as a disease related *tosha* (pathology) involved in it mentioned by commentary of Dalhana on *Sushrutsutrasthana*¹⁶.

Samprapti (pathology) of rajonivrutti

The pathogenesis of *rajonivrutti* has not been considered in Ayurvedic texts by any author. As per ayurvedic tradition, menopause is a transitional imbalance.

According to Ayurved there are four phases of life called as ashram. The first being *brahmacharya ashram*- a period of taking anything from environment for own evolution. This childhood is full of development and construction. These are *kapha* years. Second a transition into *grihastha ashram*, a period of gaining

many things on various fronts. This is adulthood, the *pitta* dominating years, provide a sense of accomplishment. Later person enters the third, life altering, *vanaprastha ashram*. This marks a period of accepting anything that comes across. As a *vata* dominated period of life, allows for insight and wisdom to grow in the life. After this period one comes to the last stage of life, *sannyasa ashram*, with a sense of contentment, calmness and peace. This is the opportunity to understand the purpose of human life.

Ayurveda considers three stages of life (called *kalas* in Sanskrit) in human: *Kaphakala* forms the first part, when *kaphadosha* predominates and the body's structure is developed to maturity. Next is *pitta kala*, or the adulthood part, where *pitta dosha* is leading where most people achieve precious things by using productivity and creativity. *vata kala*, the third part, the last part of life, and is characterized by *vata dosha*.

As menopause occurs during the last stage of *pitta kala* and the onset of *vata kala* (age may vary), it is woman experiences both *vata*- and *pitta*-related symptoms. For example insomnia, memory loss, anxious feelings, vaginal dryness, and aging skin, wrinkles are all related to an imbalance in *vata dosha*. *Pitta*-related incidences are observed in menopause as hot flashes,



urinary tract infections, anger, irritability, hyperacidity, hot flashes and rashes.

During menopause, women have low *ojas*, so body cannot maintain the balance. Because of low *ojas*, menopause becomes a state of high sympathetic nervous system—cortisol levels increase, blood pressure increases, and heart rate increases¹⁷. As a result *pitta* spreads throughout the body. The menstrual cycle can be considered as a *rakta moksha*. This is a therapy used in traditional *panchakarma*, where blood is let out to reduce excess *pitta*. Thus women having menses are in the healthy state.

In short,

- a. Elevated, unguarded *vata* disperses throughout the body, carrying *agni*, away from its original space which leads to hampered digestion and nutrition.
- b. The *agni* carried away from its original space gives rise to hot flashes, insomnia, and heart disease.
- c. High *vata* also flows all over the body, causing wrinkles, dry lusterless skin and dryness of vagina.
- d. High *vata* enters in intestine and further deep cells, bone leads to osteoporosis.
- e. The three *doshas* function in all of us to varying degrees, but one or two are usually dominant and are the most likely to become excessive or aggravated. Due to indigested food *ama*, a sticky, noxious substance is

created which clogs the cells and various channels within the body. These channels perform the function of cleansing and internal communication. As these are blocked it causes diseases.

f. As age advances there is a gradual reduction in the qualities of *tridosha*, *saptadhatu*, *mala*, *agni* and *ojas*¹⁸.

g. It *ama* also makes the liver sluggish, preventing it from breaking down hormones.

h. *Raja* is also described as *supadhatu* of *rasadhatu*¹⁹. *Raja* being defined as *anupadhatu*, there is another term *aartavam*. Bhavprakash has equated *aartavam* to *shukramdhatu* in female²⁰.

i. *Aartavam* is liable for strength of conception and health of reproductive organs of women. *Aartavam* coordinates to the ovary function of female gamete production and hormone secretion. As aging progresses *vayu* increases significantly and decrease in *pitta* and *kapha* is there. There is also reduction among seven *dhatu* right from *rasa* to *shukra* and also of *oaja*.

j. The main nourishing *rasadhatu* decreases qualitatively and quantitatively and ultimately affecting its *supadhatu* leads to *artavakshaya*. Also *vata* *avridhi* (increased *laghu*, *ruksha*, *kharaguna*) and *kaphakshaya* (decreased *gura*, *snigdha*, *dravaguna*); *shosha* of *artavavahasrotas*



take place leading to *artavanash* proceeds *torajonivritti*.

Diagnostic evaluation of menopause

A diagnosis of menopause is based on age of female, history of menstrual periods, menarche, symptoms, and the pelvic exam. Other physical exams and lab tests may also be needed if symptoms are aggravated and other concerns make diagnosis difficult²¹. Serum oestradiol E2 level is also important.

Menopausal symptoms in Ayurveda

According to modern science there is only a drop in hormone estrogen which leads to all symptoms in women. Ideally if the cause is only the drop in level of estrogen, each and every woman should have similar symptoms. But we get variety of symptoms. This can be explained by Ayurved only. That is what we need to identify, whether it's a *vata* or *pitta* imbalance.

Doshic differences in menopause

Vata	1.	Mood swings
	2.	Dry skin or mucous membranes
	3.	Dryness of vagina
	4.	Scanty bleeding during menopause
	5.	Constipation
	6.	Insomnia
	7.	Anxiety
	8.	Reduced concentration
	9.	Reduced libido
	10.	Bone loss
Pitta	1.	Hot flashes
	2.	Irritability
	3.	Excess bleeding during menopause
	4.	Skin rashes
	5.	Anger, irritability.
	6.	High blood pressure
Kapha	1.	Weight gain
	2.	Fluid retention, edema
	3.	Depression, nervousness, greed

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4. Reduced concentration
 5. High cholesterol or triglycerides
-

Ayurvedic treatment

Goals of treatment

As far as the pathology is concern basic following three goals are important.

1. Increase juiciness

Ageing decreases *kapha*. So try to increase it by adding juiciness in diet as basic principle of ayurved states that similar things increases similar things.

2. Be calm

Bring *vata* and *pitta* back to normal position by relaxing sympathetic nervous system.

3. Strengthen *agni*

When *agni* functions optimally, conditions improves as it is the root cause of all diseases.

Sushruta contributed ageing as a cause for menopause. According to *jararogchikitsasutrarasayana*²² is the only way to combat symptoms associated with *jara* (ageing). By definition any substance which helps to improve the function of *dhatu* is called as *rasayana*.

While treating menopause, it is important to build all the *dhatu*s (tissues). In addition, according to Dr. Marc Halpern, "The practitioner should not attempt to treat each and every symptom if many are present. It is best to choose the most significant symptom directly while correcting the



underlying depletion²³. This depletion stems from the aging process and some women suffer more than others. In Dr. Claudia Welch's book, she notes that the underlying depletion we may or may not face at menopause stems from draining our stress hormones earlier in life. Estrogen deficiency may be due to a long-term stress. Instead of starting hormones it is better to be calm and accept the things²⁴. Dr. Welch goes on to say, "Stress leads to less responsive to regular proportions of hormones²⁴."

Also the prime objective of *chikitsa* (therapy) in Ayurveda is *dhatu-samyak* (homeostasis) which is the important aspect of preventive medicine. *Dinacharya* (daily regimen), *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) and removal of increased *dosha* according to *ritu* (season) by application of *panchakarmawe* can maintain *dosha* in harmony²⁵." This is a very good lesson for those women in their late 20's and early 30's to begin incorporating these regimens into their daily routines in an effort minimize the effects of both aging and hormonal changes later in life.

Types of *rasayanas*

There are of three types of *rasayanas*.

1. *Aacharrasayana* (lifestyle)

It is basically related to lifestyle management, or improvement. According to Ayurved, *sadvritta* and *swasthavritta*, if

person follows proper *dinacharya* (daily regimen), *ratricharya* (night regimen) and *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen) aging process can be postponed and menopause also can be delayed. Muscular exercise is most important to maintain the strength and mineralization of the bones. Strength of the bone depends essentially if collagen is intact. In terms of reduction of *kapha* this decline in collagen matrix causes osteoporosis. Sedentary lifestyle enhances the probability of osteoporosis. *Surya-namaskara* (sun salutations), exercise, yoga *pranayama* have beneficial effect as they relieve stress. They also improve muscle tone of bladder leading to decrease in urinary troubles, dribbling and loss of urinary control.

2. *Aahararasayans* (method of food intake)

Menopause leads to *dhatukshaya*, *ojas-kshaya*, increase in *vata*, decrease in *kapha*. Dietary articles consisting of black grams, milk, ghee, meat soups, soybean, hot food decreases this deficiency. Daily consumption of ghee, milk, which increase *kapha*²⁶ can delay the process of menopause and reduces the mental and physical symptoms of menopause. Omega-3 fatty acids is found adequately in ghee. *Til* (sesame) is very good to promote commencement of *raja*. For *rajapravartan* combination of jaggery and black sesame is



a good. Zinc which has antioxidant property is profound in black til. Vegetarian diet helps in proper mineralization of bone. Soybean is good and natural source of phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens plays vital role in estrogenic therapy. If estrogen levels are high as in fibroadenosis, then phytoestrogens from soybean compete with estrogen receptors as they have weak estrogenic activity, thus producing beneficial anti-estrogenic effect on body. Versatile vegetarian diet has good effects symptoms of menopause.

3. *Dravyarasayana* (Drug therapy)

Some herbs have good effects on symptoms of menopause such as *shatavari* (asparagus racemosus), *shankhapushpi* (convolvulus pluricaulis), *chandrashur* (lepidiumsativum), *shatpushpa* (anethumsowa), *kumari* (aloe Vera). These drugs prevents senile degeneration, stimulate metabolism, promote body defense and immunity, improves memory and intelligence, increase vitality, freedom from disease, restore health and increase long life.

Management based on *dosha*

Main aim of ayurvedic treatment in menopause is to promote strengthening and rejuvenating the female reproductive system. Herbal formulations are of choice to bring back hormones on the track, and to reduce *amaby* improving digestion.

Ayurvedic treatment for menopausal symptoms involves correcting *dosha* imbalance with appropriate diet, *samshaman* therapy, internal detoxification (*panchakarma* therapy/*samshodhan* therapy), *Sattvavjayachikitsa* (positivity), yoga therapy, *Rasayan* therapy.

1. *Vata* dominant menopause

Cooked, warm, and unctuous (means small amount of fat such as ghee and olive oil). Sweet, sour and salty food, which balances *vata dosha* should be consumed.

Apanavata, which regulates the genitourinary tract and menstrual cycle, is important place to attend. Adequate amount of warm water to drink pacifies *vata*. Cooked leafy greens, helps clean motion and is enriched with calcium. Decrease tea, caffeine and other stimulants, refined sugar, cold drinks.

Lifestyle

Abhyanga (massage) is best treatment to slow down *vata* and central nervous system. Published articles have shown that massage is effective in easing anxiety and stress^{27, 28}. It also relaxes joint pain²⁹. *Shirodhara* is an ideal treatment to calm **mind**³⁰. Early bedtime, meditation, yoga, and regular exercise like walking is also important.

2. *Pitta* dominant menopause



Avoid spicy food. Salty foods should be avoided. Foods that are sour, such as curd and sour fruits, condiments and vinegar ideally need to be avoided.

Consume food which is bitter, astringent and sweet, as they calm *pitta dosha*. Bitter and astringent foods include most vegetables. Consume sweet food like rice, cow milk and cream, wheat products, juicy fruits. Avoid hot spicy foods, hot drinks and alcohol.

Lifestyle

Try to minimize stress, practice *anulom- vilompranayam*, slow breathing will be useful to reduce menopausal symptoms³¹,³². Practice *nadishodhana* (one by one nasal respiration) every day is also important. *Yoganidra* also known as yogic sleep is a meditative process while lying on back or a similar comfortable position. This restful process relaxes mind^{33,34}.

3. Kapha dominant menopause

Prefer light, dry and warm food. Avoid sweet food.

Lifestyle

Get up early.

Samshaman therapy include *Agnideepana*, *Amapachana*, *Anulomana*.

Sattvavjayachikitsa means counseling and reassurance.

Panchkarma therapy or *Panchkarmachikitsa* are kind of treatments that completely clean and purify

accumulated *doshas* from body and mind. When symptoms are constant and aggravated this therapy is much useful.

Yoga therapy is ancient holistic art of living originated in India touches physical, mental, moral, social and spiritual aspects. Word yoga in *Sanskrit* means to “join or union” and the practice of yoga brings this union to all levels of one’s self. *Sheetalipranayama*, *Ujjayipranayama* is a useful adjunctive complementary and integrative for menopausal women.

Rasayana therapy

As mentioned earlier *rasayana* means providing the adequate nourishment to the *rasadidhatus*. Thus, the *rasayana* is a special treatment influencing the *dhatus*, *agnis* and *strotas* of the body leading to betterment in the formation and maintenance of the living tissues and avoids ageing; improving of resistance against diseases increases power of human body and improve mental ability.

Main concerns of menopause

Following symptoms are particularly troublesome and can be ameliorated by taking specific diet.

Hot flashes

Many menopausal women suffer from hot flashes. It is important cause of uneasiness. There is significant association of *pitta* with blood. Women having hot flashes may develop heart disease³⁵. Here



sheetali (Cooling Breath) *pranayama* is extremely cooling and can be used during a hot flash³⁶. Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake. Eat healthy *kapha* pacifying foods like flaxseed oil, which is well known anti-inflammatory³⁷.

Sleep disturbances

To have better sleep, use *kapha* pacifying food during evening. Generally sleep disturbance is due to hot flashes, if women follow above suggestions improvement will be seen. It is better to drink hot, boiled milk with some nutmeg. Ten minutes meditation³⁸ technique induces early sleep. It is good practice to sleep at a set time and wake at a set time. The average adult needs 7–8 hours of sleep.

Vaginal dryness

This is a common complaint. It is after intercourse. This is due to accumulation of more *vata* in the pelvis. This causes narrowing and shortening of the vagina. Reduction of fat in the labia is also there. Lubricants and moisturizers, such as sesame oil can minimize vaginal dryness³⁹. Ayurveda's natural moisturizers like ghee or sesame oil are always better.

Osteoporosis

During age of 35, person slowly lose bone mass with the greatest bone loss occurring in the years around very last menstrual period⁴⁰.

According to ayurved *dharakala* or membrane of the colon is closely connected to the *dharakala* of the bones. So we may find bowel diseases like crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis can act as risk factors for osteoporosis^{41, 42}. Sometimes colon problems not having lesions, like IBS, may lead to osteoporosis^{43, 44}. Ayurveda insists on bowel movements 1–2 times a day. Drink adequate amount of water. Eat fibrous fruits and vegetables. **Calcium** intake is very important. Sesame seeds, fenugreek, ragi and dairy products are also excellent calcium sources. Protein-dominated diet may require more dietary calcium as protein can decrease the absorption of calcium^{45, 46}. Very effective practice to prevent bone loss is for any age is yoga.

Cardio vascular problems

vata stage and the influence of *rukshaguna* of *vata*, drying out of the tissues and hardening of blood vessels happens, tunica intima becomes stiff and thickened along with this, natural elastic consistency becomes loosened that supports blood circulation. The changes going on within the tunica intima take place over an extended period of time and as a result artery narrows affecting circulation and lead to hypertension, weakening of arterial walls and insufficient perfusion of tissues which results in arteriosclerosis.



According to Ayurveda atherosclerosis means *sangha*— reduced flow, stagnation and accumulation; disorder of *kapha* origin affecting *vyanavayu* in *raktavahasrota*. The causative factor being *kapha* affects *medadhātu*— adipose tissue, specifically the *medadhātuagni*— metabolism. Reduced metabolic function increases the defective formation of adipose tissue resulting in excess *medadhātu* as subcutaneous fat or fat which surrounds the soft organs. Increased *medadhātu* formation begins to encroach on the *upadhātu* of *raktadhātu*— blood, that being the arteries and blood vessels. As the *medadhātu* accumulates in the *raktavahasrota* it stagnates the flow of *vyanavayu*. This in turn increases blood pressure to counter the *kapha* stagnation. Increased *Kaphadosha* symptoms are also present like obesity, fluid retention, sinus congestion and hyperlipidaemia. *kapha* causes obstruction in the movement of heart that lead to feeling of heaviness, lethargy and cough.

Weight gain

It is one of the cognizable complaints that women face during peri-menopausal or menopausal period. From an Ayurvedic perspective, the extra weight gain is disturbance of *medadhātu*.

Phytoestrogens

Phytoestrogens are a class of compounds found in plants. They resemble in structure

to human estrogen and affect hormonal balance when consumed. Phytoestrogens are in the form of concentrated herbal or extract formulas or whole foods. A few examples of phytoestrogens in whole food form include soybean, wheat, cashews, apples, almonds, flax seed, turmeric, wild yam and licorice. Some women find that natural phytoestrogen works well; such as soybean or licorice⁴⁷.

CONCLUSION

Very few scattered references are available in ancient literature on *rajonivritti*. All ayurvedic acharyas have mentioned fifty years *rajonivritti* age. *Raja* is byproduct of *rasadhātu* which function better in *tarunavastha* and its function reduces as age advances. It is a physiological process but due to incompatible food, stress, improper food intake, life style modifications, inadequate rest, sleep pattern causes discomfort either to mind or body leading to disease status which requires medical interference. As it is aging process aggravation of *vata dosha* and diminution of *kaphadosha* and vitiated *vata* also expel out the *pitta* from its origin called *ashyapakarsha*.

The menopausal syndrome like; sleep disturbance, irritability, hot flushes, etc. can be co-relate with *vata pittajalakshana*. As



rajonivrittican be related with *jaravastha*(senility), *rasayana* therapy is the choice of treatment also for prevention of long term ill effects on *rasadisaptadhatus*. Ayurvedic *rasayana* treatment is potent, cost effective and increases the longevity. Simultaneously dietary modifications like intake of phytoestrogens available in soya bean helps to better extent.



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