

# Ayurvedic Management of Menopausal Symptoms: A Review

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## ABSTRACT

Women are the backbone of a progressing world. She goes through many changes during her life cycle. Menopause is certainly one of those innings where she goes through a period of transition both physiologically and psychologically. The age of menopause ranges from 45-55years, average being 50 years. It is during menopause that she suffers from vasomotor symptoms, urogenital symptoms, sexual dysfunction. Ayurveda describes *Rajanivritti* (menopause) as complete cessation of menstruation. Proper understanding of menopause is important in curing the menopausal symptoms as well as motivating her. Ayurveda enlightens about the importance of Ahara (nutritional food), *Vihar* (day to day activities) and counselling. Various management available in Ayurvedic classics including *Upakarmas* (gynecological procedures), medicinal preparations to cure menopausal symptoms works effectively.

**Key Words** Menopause, *Rajanivritti* *Rajanasa*, Menopause treatment

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## INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a physiological and natural event in the life of a women characterized by the permanent cessation of menstruation. It is the time of the final menstrual period followed by 12 months of amenorrhea. As per ayurveda, *Artava pravritti* (menstrual flow) takes place at the age of 12 years and *Artava* will completely cease at the age of fifty years<sup>1</sup>. The term *Rajanivritti* consists of two words; *Rajah* meaning the menstrual blood and *Nivritti* meaning cessation, accomplishment, completion. The various terminology used for *Rajanivritti* are *Rajaksayam* by Acharya Sushruta and *Rajanasa* by Acharya

Bhavamisra. During this phase of a women's life she undergoes various changes both physically and psychologically. The right diet, medicine and counselling during this period is beneficial in relieving her from the symptoms of menopause.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- To collect and analyse the concept of *Rajanivritti* and Menopause.
- To understand the menopausal symptoms and the management in the light of ayurveda.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The literature is taken from Sushruta Samhita, Charak Samhita, Shaw's textbook of

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Gynaecology, Berek and Novak's Gynecology, research papers and journals.

### DISCUSSION

As the term *Rajanivritti* consists of two words- 1. *Rajah*: the menstrual blood 2. *Nivritti*: cessation, accomplishment, completion<sup>1</sup>. *Artava pravritti* occurs at the age of twelve years due to the effect of *Jara avastha* and as *Dhatuksaya* occurs artava will cease at the age of fifty years<sup>2</sup>. *Rajonasa* is mentioned as *Vata roga*. Acharya Bhavaprakasa has described 80 types of *Vata rogas* and *Rajonasa* is one of them<sup>3</sup>. According to both Acharya Vagbhatas, *Raja and Stanya* will manifest at the age of 12 to 50 years only. *Rajanivritti* is of two types: *Kalaja* and *Akalaja*. *Kalaja (Sahaja Rajanivritti)*- This occurs at the average age of fifty years. Physiologically as age advances, due to increased Vata, decrease *Kapha* and *Dhatuksaya* results into menopause. *Rajonivritti* is the status of changes which occurs between *Proudhavastha* and *Vriddhavastha* due to *swabhava*.

*Akalaja (Asahaja Rajanivritti)* - *Akalaja Rajanivritti* is the condition where menstruation will stop prematurely, that is before age of 40 years due to *Dhatukshaya*, nutrition deficiency leading to *Dosha abhigata*, excessive *Samsodhan* leading to *Artava vaha srota abhigata*.

#### **Samprapti ghatak:**

*Dosa: Vata- Apana, vyana*

*Pitta- Pacaka*

*Kapha- Kledaka*

*Dushya: Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa, Meda, Asthi Majja and updhatu Artava*

*Agni: Jatharagni mandya, Dhatwagni visama*

*Srotas: Artava vaha and Rasa vaha*

*Srotadusti: Kriyahina avastha (less activity)*

*Udbhava sthana: Rasa rakta vaha srota*

*Vyakta sthana: Artava vaha*

**Samprapti:** In *Vrudhavasta* increased *Vata dosha* occurs, *ruksha* and *laghu* guna increases which is opposite to *Snigdha* and *Guru* guna of *Rasa dhatu* hence *Drava guna* decreases leading to *Mandagni*. *Vishamata* of *Dhatavgni* occurs leading to *Dhatukshaya*. *Dhatukshaya* affects the *Manas guna (Raja and Tama)* causing psychological disturbances. *Dhatukshaya* also effects *Rakta* reaching *Garbhasaya* in form of artava which is less in quantity leading to *Upadhatu kshya (Artava kshaya)* causing *Rajanivritti*.

**Symptoms:** The following symptoms are presented like *Kshyaya* (decrease/decline) of *Dhatu* (tissue), *Indriya* (sense organ), *Bala* (strength), *Virya* (semen), *Utshah* (enthusiasm), diminutions of *Dhatu, Indriya, Bala, Virya, Paurushaparakrama* (manliness), *Graham* (valor), *Dharan* (power), *Smarana, Vachana and Vigyana* (intellectual capabilities) along with *Vatadosha predominant*<sup>4-5</sup>. This leads to characteristic seen in menopause like *Hrid Spandanadhikya* (palpitations), *Usnataranga pratiti* (hot flushes), *Sandhi vedana* (joint pain), *Sandhisphutana* (cracking of joints), *Swedadhikyam* (excessive sweating), *Asthi ksaya*

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(loss of bone density), *Asthi toda* (pain in bones), *Asthi sandhi saithilyata* (dearrangement of joints-bones), *Anartava* (infertility), *shrama* (fatigue), *dourbalya* (weakness).

Menopause is a phase of climacteric changes. Climacteric is the phase of waning ovarian activity, and may begin 2–3 years before menopause and continue for 2–5 years after it<sup>6</sup>. The climacteric is a phase of adjustment between the active and inactive ovarian function and occupies several years of a woman's life, and it involves physical, sexual and psychological adjustments. The pathology behind menopause is that there is no more follicles are available for production of estradiol, a good estrogen needed for a women and even if some exist they become resistant to gonadotropins. With further advancing years, gonadotropins (FSH, LH) activity of the pituitary gland also ceases, and a fall in FSH level eventually occurs. The Graafian follicles fail to develop, oestrogenic activity is reduced. Estradiol production drops to optimal level of 20pg/ml. Further there is no endometrial growth leading to amenorrhoea. Women goes through different clinical symptoms like-

1. **GENITOURINARY SYMPTOMS:** Leucorrhoea, Dyspareunia, Vaginal burning sensation, soreness, Urinary incontinence, Urinary Tract infection, Dysuria

2. **VASOMOTOR SYMPTOMS:** Hot flushes, weakness, fatigue, vertigo, night sweats, insomnia. 82% experience hot flushes for > 1year, 25-50-% experiences > 5 year. In worst scenario even 10 years

3. **OSTEOPOROSIS**

4. **SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION:** Diminish genital sensation, less glandular secretion, less vessel congestion.

Hormone replacement therapy is effective against menopausal symptoms but are detrimental to the health of a women in the sense that it causes endometrial cancer, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, thromboembolism, lipid profile dysfunction, gall stones, liver dysfunction<sup>6</sup>.

### Management as per Ayurveda-

1. **Ahara-** There is important role of good nutritious food. Food rich in phytoestrogen like-pomegranate, cherries, nuts, legumes such as soya beans, peas, flax seeds, oats, wheat, garlic, apple. Banana can reduce elevated homocysteine levels, lowers risk of heart disease. Onion, Garlic contains cysteine sulfoxide derivatives<sup>7</sup>. They reduce activation of pro cancer genes to active carcinogen by lowering the activity of microsomal cytochrome p450 enzymes. A balanced vegetarian diet is most important aspect in preventive management of menopause. *Vatashamak* and *Kaphavardhak* dietary constituents help in preventing effects of *Dhatukshaya*. Ghee and milk regularly in diet is effective for menopausal symptoms. Black grams, black sesame seed promotes ovarian function, green vegetables are important for mineralization of bones. Legumes soya beans are known good source of phytoestrogens. Ghee, milk and milk products, protein and calcium rich diet. Phytoestrogen rich food like soya, wheat, nuts etc. can be helpful.

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2. **Vihara-** *Vihara* is the regular activities to keep one fit and healthy like regular exercise and *aasanas*. Women practising regular exercise are less prone to osteoporosis in early age. *Asanas* which are helpful are *Pada hastasana, halasana, pavanmukta asana, matsendriya asana, chakrasana, makarasana, savasan, pranayam-anulom vilom, bhramari, kapalbhati*.

Maintenance of normal weight, avoidance of stress and strain are the key factors for a healthy lifestyle. Yoga, exercise and meditation, *suryanamaskar, pranayam like anulomvilom* can be beneficial in relieving stress and other psychological symptoms as well as improve the muscle tone. Yoga decreases anxiety, stress, depression of such patients. Along with that, some asana helps in *Medopachan and Amapachan*, resulting in proper formation of *Rasadhatu*. Yoga controls *Pranvayu* which regulates all *Panchavayu* in human body.

Counselling is helpful to maintain a healthy mental state as many psychiatric symptoms occurs during this period. *Sadvritta* (righteous lifestyle) and *Swasthvritta* (healthy life style) are key to improve quality of life. Counselling regarding stress management and develop positive approach towards menopause can be helpful.

3. **Abhyantara Ausadhis-** *Rajanivritti* is nothing but *jaravastha* and should be treated like *jaravastha* and *rasayana* is very effective management. *Rasayana* will help in improving circulation, provide strength, intelligence,

increase appetite, has anti-ageing properties. The single herbs worth mentioning are enumerated as:

**Bala-** It is an excellent source of anti-oxidant.

**Shatavari-** It is phytoestrogenic herb, filled with isoflavonoids, antioxidants, fibres and vitamins.

**Ashwagandha-** Some clinical studies have established that if used singly in menopausal patients it controls effectively the vasomotor symptoms.

**Yastimadhu-** It is Rasayan which helps to promote growth of hair, strength and libido.

**Chandrashur-** It is *Balya* (body strengthening), *Vatashaman* (herbs which normalize *Vatdosha*).

**Gokshur-** It has anti-inflammatory properties along with a specific chemical agent named Saponin that can act as aphrodisiac.

**Amalaki-** It contains highest amount of vitamin C conjugated with gallic acid, this complex is powerful antioxidants cytoprotective and immune-modulatory action which promotes anti-aging action<sup>8</sup>.

**Haritaki-** It is rasayan, medhya, vedanasthapana, *vrsya*. It contains cebulic acid, tannic acid.

**Guduchi-** The karma is *vayasthapana, dahaprasaman, hrdaya, mutrala*. It contains barberine, gilosterol.

The following preparations are advised in post menopause- *Aswagandha churna, Satavari churna, Vidarigandha churna, Bala curna, Amlakhi curna, Goksuradi curna, Pravalapisti, Kukkutanda twak bhasma, Dasamula kwatha, Shadanga paneeya (musta, parpata, udeechya, usira, nagara, chandana), Vatavidhwamsi ras, Brahmi vati, Saraswatarista, Balarista*.

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### 4. *Upakarmas:*

- *Snehan- bahya* (application of medicated oil all over the body) with *Bala taila*, *Mahanarayan taila*, *Candanadi taila*.
- *Shirodhara* (oil mixed medicated herbs application in head by specific method)- *Shirodhara* found to be effective in the management of disturbed psychological symptoms. *Shirodhara with Shatavari oil*, *Takradhara*, *Dashmool kwath* can be helpful.
- *Nasya* (instillation of oil through nasal opening)- *Panchendriya vardhan oil*, *Anutail*. *Pratimarsha nasya with go-ghrita*.
- *Netra Tarpana* (rehydration of eyes) with *Go-ghrita*, *Triphala ghrita*, *Jeevanti ghrita*
- *Karna purana* with *Bilvadi taila* and *Karna dhupana* with *Lasun*, *Aguru*, *Rasna*. These methods are useful for disinfection of ear and rejuvenation of ear
- *Gandusha Dharana* (oil pulling) with *Irimejadi taila*, coconut oil
- *Pichu-* (medicated tampons kept in the vagina) *Shatavaritaila*, *Shatdhaut ghrita*.
- *Uttarbasti-* (medicated oil instillation through the urethral opening) with *Yastimadhutaila*.
- *Basti- Anuvasan Basti* (oil based medicated enema) and *Ksheerabasti*.

person experience menopause differently. Maintaining a healthy diet and getting regular exercise can help a person feel better and boost their overall health in long term. Ayurveda is that branch which is useful for maintaining the health of an healthy individual and curing the diseased individual. Herbs and herbomineral preparations described in ayurvedic texts are effective in curing menopausal symptoms and the area is to be explored by further indepth studies.

## CONCLUSION

Menopause is a transition into new phase of life. It should not be regarded as a health problem unless accompanied by severe symptoms. Every

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