

## MAINTENANCE OF MENOPAUSE THROUGH AYURVEDA- A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Rajonivrutti* (Menopause) is the point of time when last and final menstruation occurs. Due to increased life expectancy, about one third of life span will be spent during the period of estrogen deprivation stage with long term symptomatic and metabolic complications. In modern literature, hormone replacement therapy is indicated to overcome the short term and long term consequences of estrogen deficiency. But it has its own side effects. *Ayurveda* has a lot of drugs and procedures to maintain and to minimize *Rajonivrutti Janya Vikara*. Thus, *Ayurvedic* drugs can be used as a substitute to hormone

replacement therapy for the maintenance of menopause and in addition to cure menopausal symptoms.

**KEYWORDS:** Menopause, *Rajonivrutti*, *Ayurveda*, Hormone replacement therapy.

### INTRODUCTION

Every substance which is created on this earth has to be destroyed or deteriorated. Menopause means permanent stoppage of menstruation at the end of reproductive life for twelve consecutive months without any other pathology. During this period there is gradual but progressive loss of ovarian follicular activity. The age of menopause is genetically predetermined. It ranges between 45-55 years, average being 50 years.<sup>[1]</sup> It is point of time when last and final menstruation occurs. The phase of 'menarche' and 'menopause' has important influences on the physical, psychological, social, and emotional aspects of a woman. The menopause is a natural phenomenon and one of the life's important milestones. Due to increased life expectancy, about one third of life span will be spent during the period of estrogen deprivation stage with long term symptomatic and metabolic complications. In

majority, apart from cessation of menses, no more symptoms are evident. In some women, symptoms appear like vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes), psychological changes like mood disturbance, insomnia, cognitive difficulty, anxiety, depression, memory loss (*Manasa Bhavas*), sexual dysfunction, dysuria, vaginal infections, wrinkling of skin, osteoporotic changes, cardiovascular changes etc. In some women, menstrual cycle shows irregularity with or without excessive bleeding prior to menopause.

Prevalence of psychological and somatic symptoms is seen in 80% of women in perimenopausal period.<sup>[2]</sup> Being a common and distressing problem; it needs effective and safe treatment. In modern literature, HRT (hormone replacement therapy) is indicated to overcome the short term and long term consequences of estrogen deficiency. But it has its own side effects. It can lead to endometrial cancer, breast cancer, venous thromboembolic disease, coronary heart disease, gall bladder disease. Thus, *Ayurvedic* drugs can be used as an alternative therapy to HRT.

In *Ayurvedic* texts, very few references are available on this physiological event under the heading *Rajonivrutti*. The age of *Rajonivrutti* is said to be around 50 years.<sup>[3]</sup> It may be probably correlated with *Avakrutta Nashtartava* (physiological) and *Artava-Kshaya* also.<sup>[4]</sup> Menopausal symptoms are more nearer to *Vata Vriddhi* symptoms. Because this age is *Sandhikala* of two *Avastha* means a mid period between *Yuvavastha* and *Vridhdhavastha*. During this period there is intermediate level of *Pitta* and peak level of *Vata* aggravation. Along with vitiated *Pitta*, *Vata* creates hot flushes, excessive sweating, sleep disturbance, irritability, dryness of vagina etc. which are similar to *Vataja-Pittaja* symptoms. To minimize menopausal symptoms, *Vata* should be in equilibrium. It can be pacified with the *Ayurvedic* drugs like *Ashwagandha*, *Shatavari*, *Bala*, *Raasna*, *Brahmi*, *Chopachini*, *Dashmoola*, *Praval Pishti*, *Godanti Bhasma*, *Saptamrita Lauha*, *Chavyanaprasha*, *Saraswatarishta* etc. and procedures like *Shirodhara*, *Vasti Karma*, *Nasya*.

## DISCUSSION ON DISEASE REVIEW

Menopause means permanent stoppage of menstruation at the end of reproductive life for twelve consecutive months without any other pathology. During this period there is gradual but progressive loss of ovarian follicular activity. Menopause is a natural process just as puberty is natural. At the age of 32-50 years woman is called as *Adhirudha* and after 50 years she is called as *Vridhdha* in accordance with *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*.<sup>[5]</sup> The average age for menopause is 45 years, but many factors influence the time of the menopause like hereditary,

her general state of health and the climate in which she lives. So *Arundatta* opines that this is the probable age. He mentioned the word *Prayika* for this probability.

Few years prior to menopause, along with depletion of follicles, the follicles become resistant to pituitary gonadotrophins. As a result, effective folliculogenesis is impaired and leads to diminished estradiol production.

### **Nidana**

In modern science, the main reason is diminished estrogen. In *Ayurveda* literature, there is no separate description about its *Nidana*, *Purvarupa*, *Rupa*, *Samprapti*. Some factors may be considered to be involved in causing menopause.

- *Kala*.
- *Swabhava*.
- *Vata*.
- *Karma*.
- *Dhatukshaya*.
- *Abhighata*- causes *Artava Nasha* as seen in post-surgical menopause, post-radiation menopause.

### **Rupa**

Due to estrogen deficiency, folliculogenesis disturb which lead to anovulation, oligo-ovulation, premature corpus luteum. Ovaries shrink in size, become wrinkled, thinning of cortex. Fallopian tubes show feature of atrophy. The uterus becomes smaller. The endometrium becomes thin and atrophic. The vagina becomes narrower. Vaginal pH becomes alkaline. Bladder and urethra's epithelium becomes thin and is prone to damage and infection. Supporting ligaments lose their tone. Following menopause, there is loss of bone mass by about 3-5% per year. Risk of cardiovascular disease is high. In some women, symptoms appear like vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes), psychological changes like mood disturbance, insomnia, cognitive difficulty, anxiety, depression, memory loss (*Manasa Bhavas*), sexual dysfunction, dysuria, vaginal infections, wrinkling of skin, osteoporotic changes, cardiovascular changes etc. In some women, menstrual cycle shows irregularity with or without excessive bleeding prior to menopause.

**Samprapati**

*Kalaja Rajonivrutti* (Spontaneous Menopause) – *Kala, Swabhava, Vata* are the responsible factors.

*Akalaja Rajonivrutti* (Induced Menopause) - *Karma, Abhighata (Vedhana of Artavavaha Srotasa), Dhatukshaya* specially of *Rasa* and *Rakta* is causing *Artava Nasha* or *Kshaya*.

**Chikitsa**

As it is the period of *Vata Vriddhi* and *Pitta aggravation*, the selection of treatment and *Aahara* should be *Vatashamaka, Pittashamaka, Balya, Jeevaniya, Rasayana, Medhya*.

**Drugs are**

1. Ashwagandha (*Withania Somnifera*): It is showing *Balya, Brimhana, analgesic, antibacterial, antistress, immunomodulator, immunostimulative, tonic* actions.<sup>[6]</sup>
2. Shatavari (*Asparagus Racemosus*): *Vata-Pittahara, Rasayana, Vrishya, uterine tonic*; it contains *diasogenin* which is precursor for the synthesis of *progesterone*. The unmodified steroid has *estrogenic activity* and can reduce the level of *serum cholesterol*.<sup>[7]</sup>
3. Bala (*Sida Cordifolia*): This plant has *Madhura Vipaka, Sheeta Virya, Laghu-Snigdha-Pichilla Guna, Madhura Rasa*. So it can be used as a drug for curing menopausal symptoms like hot flushes. It works on *Vata-Pitta Dosha* and having properties like *Balya, Brimhana, Ojavardhaka, cures the Garbhashaya Shathilaya and dysuria*.<sup>[8]</sup>
4. Shatapushpa: This plant has *Katu Vipaka, Ushna Virya, Laghu-Ruksha-Teekshana Guna, Katu-Tikta Rasa*. It works on *Vata-Kapha Dosha*.
5. Yashtimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza Glabra*): *Madhura Rasa, Guru, Snigdha, Sheeta Virya, Madhura Vipaka, Vatapittashamaka, Vranashotha, Visha, Khalitya, Palitya, Shastrabhighataja vrana, Vatavikara, Vatarakta, Amavata, Shiroroga, Vamana, Trishna, Vibandha, Udarashoola, Amlapitta, Paittika apasmara, Hikka, Raktavikara, Raktalpata, Raktapitta, Shwasa, Kasa, Swarabheda, Yakshma, Urogata vrana, Urahkshata, Parshwashoola, Mootrakrichchhra, Pooyameha, Paittika prameha, Shukrameha, Varnavikara, Kandu, Charma roga, Jeerna jwara, Samanya daurbalya, Netra roga*<sup>[9]</sup>
6. Brahmi (*Bacopa Monnieri*): major ingredient of *Saraswatarishta*; It has *intellect promoting and anxiolytic activities*. It is *potent nerve tonic and cardiogenic*.
7. Shankhapushpi (*Convolvulus Prostratus*)-*Katu. Tikta. Kashaya Rasa, Sheeta Virya, Madhura Vipaka, Medhya, Tridoshashamaka, Mashtishkadaurbalya, Unmada, Apasmara, Anidra, Bhrama, Agnimandya, Anaha, Gulma, Arsha, Vibandha, Hridroga, Raktapitta,*

Mootrakrichchhra, Pooyameha, Shukradaurbalya, Garbhashaya Daurbalya, Ajeerna, Dahapradhana Jwara, Pralapa, Daha, Samanya Daurbalyap<sup>[10]</sup>

8. Shankha Bhasma
9. Pravala Pishti, Kukkutandatvaka Bhasma (Natural calcium supplement) - it is used to treat disorders like Pitta aggravation and calcium deficiency because it has cooling and soothing effect. Calcium is essential for menopausal women.
10. Chopachini- having Tikta Rasa, Ushna Virya, Deepana.
11. Saptamrita Lauha, Mandura Bhasma, Punarnava Mandoora, Dhatri Lauha- for anemia, Dhatuvarhdhana.
12. Ashwagandharishta.
13. Ashokarishta- It is having Sheeta Virya, Madhya Vipaka, Tridoshashamaka, Rasayana, Vayasthapana, Balya, Medhya, Manasadoshahara, Vedanasthapana properties.
14. Saraswatarishta- all the drugs in this formulation are different from one another, having different actions e.g., Medhya, Rasayana, Balya, Dhatupushtikara, Jeevaniya, Agnivardhaka etc. it is having antioxidant, nootropic, adaptogenic, immunomodulatory and intellect promoting properties.
15. Chawyanaprasha.
16. Amalaki Rasayana- good for Vayasthapana, Medha, Smriti, Balya.
17. Brahma Rasayana, Medhya Rasayana.
18. Vayasthapana Gana drugs.

### Procedures

- **Shirodhara**- This Karma is very fruitful for menopausal women. It is a type of *Parisheka* among *Murdha Taila*. It is preferred treatment to control *Vata*. The region where *Shirodhara* is performed overlies mainly the cortex arterial branches, venous sinuses, superior sagittal and the cavernous venous sinuses. Due to continuous flow of warm oil (*Bala Taila*, *Dashmoola Taila*) used for *Shirodhara*, there is local vasodilatation and circulation improves. It is considered as the best *Samshodhna Karma* for *Vata*.<sup>[11]</sup>
- **Sneha Yonipichu**: With *Jatyadi Taila*, *Dhatyayadi Taila*. It causes strengthening of pelvic floor, prevents vaginal infections and dyspareunia.
- **Panchavalkala Kwatha Yonidhavana**: Removes pathologic microorganisms from the cervicovaginal canal, thus prevents vaginal infections.

*Yoga and Pranayama*- causes relaxation of mind and body, strengthens the pelvic floor muscles.

- Ardhalasana.
- Halasana.
- Shavasana.
- Sarvanagasana.
- Suptabdhakonasana.
- Sheetali, Sheetkari, Mulabandha, Ashwini Mudra.

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