



Ayurvedic Approaches to Managing Postmenopausal Syndrome: A Comprehensive Review

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ABSTRACT

Rajonivruttijanya Lakshana refers to a group of symptoms caused by degenerative changes that occur post-menopause. These symptoms include hot flushes, fatigue, disturbed sleep, dyspareunia (painful intercourse), vaginal dryness, leucorrhoea (abnormal vaginal discharge), decreased sexual desire, depression, skin wrinkling, anxiety, mood swings, dementia, inability to concentrate, and osteoporosis. Addressing these symptoms requires significant healthcare initiatives to enhance the quality of life for post-menopausal women.

Ayurvedic management of menopause emphasizes rejuvenating and strengthening the reproductive system and the entire body. Treatments for Rajonivruttijanya Lakshana include Rasayan Chikitsa (rejuvenation therapy), Abhyanga (oil massage), Basti (medicated enema), Shirodhara (oil pouring therapy), and supplements of phytoestrogens. Additionally, the use of Bruhaniya (nourishing), Balya (strengthening), and Vayasthapana (age-stabilizing) herbs, combined with practices for mental health maintenance such as yoga, asanas, meditation, and proper dietary and lifestyle habits (Ahara and Vihara), can transform the distressing menopause experience into a healthy and positive phase of life. It is also crucial to avoid factors that aggravate Vata dosha, as its imbalance naturally increases with age. This approach not only alleviates the symptoms but also promotes overall well-being and vitality in post-menopausal women.

Keywords- Menopause, Rajonivrutti, Ahara, Rasayana, Balya Mahakashaya

Introduction

Menopause marks the permanent cessation of menstruation, signifying the end of a woman's reproductive life due to the loss of ovarian follicular activity.ⁱ The term 'Menopause' is derived from the Greek words 'Menos' (month) and 'Pausis' (cessation).ⁱⁱ Typically occurring between the ages of 45 and 55, menopause is a natural transition.ⁱⁱⁱ It denotes the final cessation of menstruation, whereas the term 'climacteric' refers to the transitional period during which a woman gradually shifts from her reproductive years to senescence. Acharya Sushruta and Acharya Vagbhata have indicated that menopause (Rajonivritti) occurs around the age of 50.^{iv}

Rajonivruttijanya Lakshana (Post-Menopausal Symptoms): Menopause is accompanied by a group of symptoms known as Rajonivruttijanya Lakshana, which result from degenerative changes in the body. These symptoms include hot flushes, fatigue, disturbed sleep, dyspareunia (painful intercourse), vaginal dryness, leucorrhoea (abnormal vaginal discharge), decreased sexual desire, depression, skin wrinkling, anxiety, mood swings, dementia, inability to concentrate, and osteoporosis. Addressing these symptoms requires a significant healthcare initiative to enhance the quality of life for post-menopausal women.

Material & Method:

- Ayurvedic Classics: Information sourced from the foundational texts of Ayurveda, including Bruhattryi, Laghutrayi, and Nighantu.
- Modern Texts: Review of contemporary literature related to Postmenopausal Syndrome.
- Scientific Literature: Analysis of relevant scientific studies and research papers.
- Online Resources: Utilization of credible internet materials and digital publications.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis) of Rajonivritti (Menopause)

- Age Factor: Around the age of 50 years in women.
- Natural Decline: Due to the inherent nature of the female body.
- Doshha Imbalance: Imbalance of Doshas with increased Vata and Pitta, and decreased Kapha.
- Agni Imbalance: Irregularities in the digestive fire, including Jatharagni (digestive fire), Dhatwagni (tissue metabolism), and Upadhatwagni (sub-tissue metabolism).
- Dhatu Depletion: Decrease in bodily tissues such as Rasa (plasma), Raktha (blood), Mamsa (muscle), Medha (fat), Asthi (bone), Majja (marrow), and Shukra (reproductive tissue).
- Upadhatu Depletion: Decrease in sub-tissues like Artava (menstrual fluid), Kandara (ligaments), Sira (veins), Vasa (muscle fat), Twacha (skin), Snayu (nerves), Sandhi (joints), and Kesh (hair).
- Rajonivritti State: The state of menopause.⁵

Menopausal Symptoms^{vi}

Menopause brings with it a range of symptoms that can significantly impact a woman's quality of life. These symptoms can be categorized into several key areas:

- **Vasomotor Symptoms:** Menopausal women often experience vasomotor symptoms such as hot flushes, palpitations, fatigue, weakness, disturbed sleep, and night sweats. These symptoms can be particularly distressing and disruptive to daily life.
- **Genital and Urinary Symptoms:** Another area of concern includes genital and urinary symptoms, such as dyspareunia (painful intercourse), which can affect a woman's sexual health and intimacy.
- **Vaginal Symptoms:** Vaginal health can also be compromised during menopause, leading to issues such as vaginal dryness, leucorrhoea (abnormal vaginal discharge), pruritus (itching), dyspareunia, and an increased risk of vaginal infections.
- **Sexual Dysfunction:** Decreased sexual desire and depression are common during menopause, contributing to sexual dysfunction and affecting overall well-being.
- **Skin and Hair Changes:** Menopausal women may notice changes in their skin and hair, including skin wrinkling, loss of skin elasticity, skin thinning, loss of pubic and axillary hair, and mild baldness. These changes can influence self-esteem and body image.
- **Psychological Changes:** The psychological impact of menopause includes symptoms such as anxiety, headaches, insomnia, irritability, dysphasia (language disorder), depression, mood swings, dementia, and an inability to concentrate. These symptoms can profoundly affect mental health and daily functioning.
- **Musculoskeletal Symptoms:** Finally, menopause can lead to musculoskeletal issues such as osteoporosis, an increased risk of fractures, and back pain, which can impair mobility and physical health.

Ayurvedic Principles for Managing Rajonivritti Lakshanas (Menopausal Symptoms)

In Ayurvedic texts, menopause is acknowledged as a natural physiological process and an aspect of aging. Ayurvedic treatment for menopause focuses on rejuvenating and strengthening both the reproductive system and the entire body. The following principles are key to managing menopausal symptoms:

I. Ahara Rasayana (Diet)

Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana are dietary guidelines in Ayurveda that help prevent premature aging and health issues. Key principles include consuming fresh and pure foods, eating appropriate quantities, maintaining regular meal times, and incorporating all six tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, astringent) for nutritional balance. Emphasis is also placed on mindful eating, proper food combinations, seasonal and local foods, and appropriate cooking methods to retain nutrients. Following these guidelines promotes overall well-being and longevity.

II. Achara Rasayana (Lifestyle)

Achara Rasayana involves incorporating specific lifestyle practices to promote health and longevity, particularly important for post-menopausal women. These practices include:

- Dincharya (Daily Regimen): Following a structured daily routine that aligns with natural bodily rhythms.
- Ratricharya (Night Regimen): Establishing a calming and consistent nighttime routine to ensure restful sleep.

- Ritucharya (Seasonal Regimen): Adapting lifestyle and dietary habits according to the changing seasons to maintain balance and harmony with the environment.
- Swasthavritta and Sadvritta (Code of Conduct): Adhering to personal, social, and preventive health practices to promote overall well-being. This includes maintaining hygiene, ethical behavior, and social responsibilities.
- Tryopastambha (Diet, Sleep, and Coitus): Balancing diet, sleep, and sexual activity to support physical and mental health.^{vii}

III. Dravya Rasayana (Drug Therapy)

According to Acharya Charaka, there are two primary types of treatment in Dravya Rasayana (drug therapy):

a. Samshodhana Chikitsa / Panchakarma (Cleansing Therapies):^{viii ix}

Regular Removal of Aggravated Doshas: This involves the regular elimination of excess doshas to maintain their balance within the body. Techniques such as Abhyanga (oil massage), Nasya (nasal administration), Karna Taila (ear oiling), Padabhyanga (foot massage), and Matra Basti (medicated enema) are employed to enhance bodily strength. Regular practice of Panchakarma therapies is highly beneficial.

- **Abhyanga:** This oil massage is considered to be anti-aging (Jarahar), stress-relieving (Shramhar), and effective against Vata disorders (Vatahar). It improves vision (Drishtiprasadakar), nourishes the body (Pushtikar), promotes longevity (Ayushyakar), induces sleep (Swapnakar), and mitigates Kapha and Vata imbalances.^{x xi xii}
- **Shirodhara:** This procedure involves pouring medicated oil, ghee, milk, buttermilk, or decoctions continuously over the head. It is beneficial for premature greying of hair, fatigue, sleeplessness, stress, and psychological disorders such as mood swings, anxiety, and depression. When performed with oil or ghee, it is particularly effective for Vata disorders, leaving the skin soft and healthy.^{xiii}
- **Basti:** Medicated enema is the primary treatment for Vata disorders. Matra Basti, which uses a smaller quantity of medicated oil, can be administered daily, making it suitable for menopausal women. Yoni Pichu, Yoni Dhoopana, and Yoni Prakshalana (vaginal therapies) are useful for treating vaginal atrophy, dryness, and dyspareunia.^{xiv}

b. Samshamana Chikitsa (Palliative Therapies):^{xv}

For Patients Unsuitable for Cleansing Therapies: These therapies are also used following cleansing treatments.

- **Ahara (Wholesome Food):** Daily intake of ghee and milk helps delay menopause by increasing Kapha. Ghee pacifies Vata and Pitta, enhances general health, and acts as a body rejuvenator. It is known for its properties as a promoter of digestion (Agnivardhaka), cooling in effect (Sheeta Virya), pain-relieving (Shulahara), antipyretic (Jwar-hara), aphrodisiac (Vrishya), and age stabilizer (Vayasthapaka).^{xvi}
- **Vihara (Wholesome Activities):** This includes tolerating natural urges (adharniya vega) and avoiding suppression, refraining from day sleeping (diva swapna) and night wakefulness (ratri jagaran), and practicing moderation in coitus, alcohol consumption, physical exertion, and emotional fluctuations.
- **Rasayan Chikitsa (Rejuvenation Therapy):** Rasayan Chikitsa, also known as rejuvenation therapy, focuses on nourishing bodily tissues through micro-nutrition. This process supports the regeneration, revival, and revitalization of Dhatus (tissues), promoting overall health and vitality. Through this therapy, the body receives essential nutrients in a form that is easily assimilated, enhancing the renewal and strengthening of tissues, and ensuring a harmonious balance within the body.
- **Phytoestrogen Supplementation:** Properly utilized phytoestrogens can significantly aid in managing menopausal symptoms. These natural compounds, found in various plants, mimic estrogen's effects in the body, thereby helping to balance hormones and alleviate discomfort. Rich sources of phytoestrogens include flax seeds, soybeans, dates, dried apricots, sesame seeds, garlic, peaches, berries, wheat bran, tofu, cauliflower, cabbage, Shatavari, Shatapushpa, and Guduchi. Incorporating these foods into the diet can reduce menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, mood swings, and vaginal dryness, promoting a smoother transition through menopause.^{xvii}
- **Aushadha (Medicinal Plants)**
 - Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya (Life-Benefiting Herbs):^{xviii xix}

The term Jeevaneeya is rooted in the concept of Ayushya, meaning beneficial for life. The herbs categorized under Jeevaneeya Mahakashaya are known for their life-enhancing properties. These include:

- Jeevaka (*Malaxis musifera*)
- Rishabhaka (*Crepidium acuminatum*)
- Meda (*Polygonatum cirrhifolium*)
- Mahameda (*Polygonatum verticillatum*)
- Kakoli (*Roscoea purpurea*)

- Ksheerakakoli (*Lilium polyphyllum*)
- Mudagparni (*Phaseolus trilobus*)
- Mashaparni (*Teramnus labialis*)
- Jeevanti (*Leptadenia reticulata*)
- Madhuka (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)

Among these, six herbs—Jeevaka, Rishabhaka, Kakoli, Ksheerakakoli, Meda, and Mahameda—are endangered and not easily available. To address this, Acharya Bhavaprakasha has recommended Pratinidhi Dravya (substitute herbs) for these endangered plants.

➤ **Vayasthapak Aushadha (Age Stabilizer Drugs):** In Ayurvedic medicine, these herbs are classified for their potential to sustain youthfulness and promote overall health. The key medicinal plants in this category include:

- Amrita/Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*): Known for its rejuvenating properties.
- Abhaya/Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*): Recognized for its health-promoting benefits.
- Dhatri/Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*): Valued for its nutritional and anti-aging properties.
- Rasna (*Pluchea lanceolata*): Used for its therapeutic effects on joint health.
- Shweta (*Clitoria ternatea*): Appreciated for its cognitive and overall health benefits.
- Jeevanti (*Leptadenia reticulata*): Known for its nourishing and revitalizing qualities.
- Shatavari/Atirasa (*Asparagus racemosus*): Esteemed for its benefits on female reproductive health and vitality.
- Mandookparni (*Centella asiatica*): Renowned for its cognitive enhancing properties.
- Shalparni (*Desmodium gangeticum*): Utilized for its strengthening and restorative effects.
- Punarnava (*Boerhaavia diffusa*): Celebrated for its rejuvenative and detoxifying properties.

➤ **Balya Mahakashaya (Strength-Enhancing Herbs)^{xx}:** Balya Mahakashaya refers to a group of herbs known for their strength-enhancing properties. These herbs are recognized for their ability to improve overall physical strength and vitality. The key herbs in this category include:

- Aindri (*Citrullus colocynthis* Schrad.)
- Rishabhi (or Rishabhaka) (*Manilkara hexandra*)
- Atirasa (*Asparagus racemosus*)
- Rishyaprokta (*Teramnus labialis*)
- Payasya (*Ipomoea paniculata*)
- Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)
- Sthira (*Desmodium gangeticum*)
- Katukarohini (*Picrorhiza kurroa*)
- Bala (*Sida cordifolia*)
- Atibala (*Abutilon indicum*)^{xxi}

➤ **Other drugs:**

- Kumari (Aloevera)
- Brahmi (bacopa monniri)
- Mulethi (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)
- Musta (*Cyperus rotundus*)
- Triphala
- Sankhapuspi (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*)

Discussion

Rajonivritti Janya Lakshana refers to a group of symptoms resulting from degenerative changes that occur post-menopause. The objective of the present study titled "Ayurvedic Management of Post-Menopausal Syndrome (Rajonivritti Lakshanas)" was to explore and analyze the effectiveness of Ayurvedic treatments. Ayurvedic management of menopausal syndrome is highly effective, with no adverse side effects. It is cost-effective and can increase longevity.

Dietary Management (Ahara Rasayana): Following specific dietary guidelines, including fresh and balanced meals with all six tastes, helps maintain overall health. Phytoestrogens in foods like flax seeds and soybeans can alleviate menopausal symptoms.

Lifestyle Practices (Achara Rasayana): A structured daily routine, seasonal adaptations, and maintaining personal and preventive health practices support mental and physical well-being. Balancing diet, sleep, and coitus is crucial.

Therapeutic Interventions (Dravya Rasayana): Ayurvedic treatments such as cleansing therapies and palliative therapies effectively manage menopausal symptoms. Practices like oil massage, oil pouring therapy, and medicated enemas help rejuvenate the body.

Medicinal Herbs (Aushadha): Incorporating age-stabilizing and strength-enhancing herbs like Guduchi, Haritaki, and Ashwagandha provides significant health benefits and enhances vitality. **Mental and Emotional Well-Being:** Yoga, meditation, and pranayama are essential for managing psychological symptoms, improving digestion, and promoting mental stability.

Conclusion

The Ayurvedic approach to managing post-menopausal syndrome offers a holistic, safe, and effective alternative to conventional hormone therapy. By integrating dietary management (Ahara Rasayana), lifestyle practices (Achara Rasayana), therapeutic interventions (Dravya Rasayana), and the use of medicinal herbs (Aushadha), women can navigate the challenges of menopause with improved physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The principles of Ayurveda emphasize the importance of balance, nourishment, and rejuvenation, making it possible for post-menopausal women to lead healthier, happier, and more fulfilling lives. This comprehensive and natural approach not only alleviates menopausal symptoms but also promotes overall vitality and longevity.

ⁱ Dutta D.C., Textbook of Gynaecology, 5th edition, page no.55

ⁱⁱ Dinesh Kumar Rai, Prarambhik Prasuti and string Vigyan 5th edition, Sakshi publications, Jaipur.

ⁱⁱⁱ D.C. Dutta, Textbook of Gynaecology, 5th edition, page no.55

^{iv} Sushrut sharir 3/11

^v Dr Kavya g. m.- research scholar, A Clinical Study of Vayahsthapana Ma hakashaya & Vidari Kanda in Rajonivritti Avastha w.s.r. to Menopause Syndrome thesis, N.I.A., Jaipur, 2016, pg number 25.

^{vi} D.C. Dutta, Textbook of Gynecology, 5th edition, page no.55

^{vii} Sharma Dr. R.K., Dash Vaidya Bhagwan, Charaka Samhita (based on Chakrapani Dutta's Ayurveda Dipika), Vol.III, edition, Varanasi, Chaukhamba Sanskrit series office, Varanasi, 2015; 31. (C.Ci.1:4/31-35)

^{viii} Prof. Ajay Kumar Sharma, Kaya Chikitsa Part 4th, Chaukhamba Publications, the year 2010, page no. 4

^{ix} Sastri R, Pandeya GS. Vidhyotini Hindi Commentary, Charaka Samhita Sutra sthana 5. Vol. 1. Varanasi: Choukhambha Bharti Academy; 2008.

^x Ashtang Hridaya sutrasthana 2/7

^{xi} Sastri R, Pandeya GS. Vidhyotini Hindi Commentary, Charaka Samhita sutra sthana 5/85,89. Vol. 1. Varana si: Choukhambha Bharti Academy; 2008.

^{xii} Vaidya Haridas shridhar Kasture, Ayurvedic Pan chakarma Vigyan, Publications-Shree Baidyanath Ayurved Bhawan private limited, edition 9th, pg no.83).

^{xiii} Vaidya Haridas Shridhar Kasture, Ayurvedic Pan chakarma Vigyan, Publications-Shree Baidyanath Ayurveda Bhawan private limited, edition 9th, page no.93

^{xiv} Vaidya Haridas shridhar Kasture, Ayurvedic Pan chakarma Vigyan, Publications-Shree Baidyanath Ayurved Bhawan private limited, edition 9th, 2006, pg no.344, 345,396

^{xv} Prof. Ajay Kumar Sharma, Kaya Chikitsa Part 4th, Chaukhamba Publications, the year 2010, page no. 13

^{xvi} Ashtang Samgraha, Sharir sthana 1/69

^{xvii} www.healthline.com/Nutrition

^{xviii} Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana, Shadvirechanashatashritiya Adhyaya, 4/9 (1). Available from: <http://niimh.nic.in/ebooks/ecaraka/?mod=read>. [Last accessed on 2020 Sep 28].

^{xix} Charaka Samhita, Sutra Sthana, Shadvirechanashatashritiya Adhyaya, 4/8. Available from: <http://niimh.nic.in/ebooks/ecaraka/?mod=read>. [Last accessed on 2020 Sep 28].

^{xx} Sastri R, Pandeya GS. Vidhyotini Hindi Commentary, Charaka Samhita Sutra sthana 4/10. Vol. 1. Varanasi: Choukhambha Bharti Academy; 2008.

^{xxi} Sastri R, Pandeya GS. Vidhyotini Hindi Commentary, Charaka Samhita Sutra sthana 4/10. Vol. 1. Varanasi: Choukhambha Bharti Academy; 2008.