



Review Article

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MENOPAUSE AND ITS AYURVEDIC MANAGEMENT - A HOLISTIC REVIEW

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Abstract:

Menopause is a natural physiological milestone marking the end of the reproductive phase in a woman's life. It occurs due to the decline in ovarian follicular activity, leading to a decrease in estrogen and progesterone levels. Though a natural transition, it is often accompanied by a wide range of physical, psychological and metabolic disturbances collectively termed "Menopausal Syndrome."

Ayurveda perceives this phase as *Rajonivritti Avastha*, a part of the natural aging process characterized by *Vata* predominance and *Dhatu Kshaya* (tissue depletion). The Ayurvedic approach emphasizes individualized management through *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara* (lifestyle), *Aushadha* (medicinal therapy), *Rasayana* (rejuvenation therapy), *Panchakarma* and *Sattvavajaya Chikitsa* (mental balance therapy). This article provides an in-depth analysis of menopause from both Ayurvedic and modern perspectives, exploring its pathophysiology, symptomatology and holistic management modalities.

Keywords: Menopause, *Rajonivritti*, *Vata Pradhana Avastha*, *Rasayana*, *Shatavari*, *Ashwagandha*, *Panchakarma*, Hormonal imbalance.

Introduction:

Menopause represents the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of ovarian follicular activity. The World Health Organization defines it as the absence of menstruation for twelve consecutive months, marking the end of reproductive capability.¹ The average age of menopause in Indian women is around 47–50 years.

Ayurvedically, *Rajonivritti* is a natural phenomenon associated with the *Madhyama Vaya* (middle age). *Acharya Sushruta* clearly mentions²-

“तद्वर्षात् द्वादशात् काले वर्तमानंसृक् पुनः
जरापक्व शरीराणाम याति पंचाशत क्षयं॥”

- ✓ Menstruation usually ceases by the age of fifty.

This stage is not a disease but a physiological transition; however, due to lifestyle stressors, poor nutrition and improper daily regimen, women may experience a variety of disorders requiring therapeutic attention.³

Modern Understanding of Menopause

Definition:

Menopause marks the permanent cessation of menses for 12 consecutive months due to the loss of ovarian follicular function.⁴

Physiological Basis:

With age, ovarian follicles become resistant to gonadotropins (FSH and LH), leading to:

- Decreased estrogen and progesterone
- Irregular ovulation
- Endometrial atrophy
 - ✓ This hormonal imbalance manifests as vasomotor, somatic and psychological symptoms.

Stages of Menopause:

1. **Pre-menopause:** Period leading up to menopause with irregular cycles.
2. **Menopause:** Final menstrual period confirmed retrospectively after 12 months of amenorrhea.
3. **Post-menopause:** Period following menopause; characterized by estrogen deficiency.⁵

Common Symptoms:

- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Mood swings, depression, irritability
- Vaginal dryness, dyspareunia

- Osteoporosis and joint pain
- Sleep disturbances, fatigue⁶
- Weight gain and metabolic disorders

Ayurvedic Perspective of Menopause

Concept of *Rajonivritti*:

In Ayurveda, menstruation is governed by *Artava Dhatu* and influenced by *Pitta Dosha*. With advancing age, there is a predominance of *Vata dosha* leading to depletion (*Kshaya*) of *Artava Dhatu* and eventually *Rajonivritti* (cessation of menstruation).⁷ Hence, menopause is viewed as *Vata-Pradhana Avastha* associated with *Dhatu Kshaya*.

Dosha-Dushya Sammurchana:

- ***Vata Dosha***: Becomes aggravated, leading to dryness, insomnia, anxiety and joint pain.
- ***Pitta Dosha***: Causes hot flashes, irritability and sweating.
- ***Kapha Dosha***: Diminishes, resulting in loss of lubrication, energy and stability.

Samprapti (Pathogenesis):

1. *Vata Vriddhi* due to *Dhatu Kshaya* and aging.
2. *Pitta Anubandha* causing hot flashes and irritability.
3. *Ojus Kshaya* resulting in fatigue and mental disturbances.
4. *Rasa and Artava Dhatu Kshaya* leading to hormonal imbalance.

Ayurvedic Symptomatology:

Ayurvedic Term	Modern Equivalent Symptom
<i>Artava Nasha</i>	Cessation of menstruation
<i>Sweda Pravritti</i>	Hot flashes
<i>Manodaurbalya</i>	Depression and irritability
<i>Sandhishoola</i>	Joint pain
<i>Twak Rukshata</i>	Dryness of skin
<i>Kshut-Nidra Vaishamya</i>	Loss of appetite and sleep disturbance
<i>Balakshaya</i>	Weakness and fatigue

Management Principles in Ayurveda:

The Ayurvedic approach to menopause is **holistic**, aiming to balance *Vata*, nourish *Dhatu*s and stabilize *Manas* (mind).

Objectives:

1. *Vata-Pitta Shamana* – pacification of aggravated *Doshas*.
2. *Dhatu Pushti* – nourishment and rejuvenation.
3. *Sattvavajaya* – strengthening of mind and emotions.
4. *Rasayana Prayoga* – anti-aging and tissue-regenerating therapy.⁸

Ayurvedic Management

Aahara (Dietary Regimen):

A *Vata-pacifying* and *Rasayana-rich* diet is recommended.

Recommended Foods	Rationale
Warm milk, Ghee, sesame seeds, almonds	Nourish <i>Ojas</i> , lubricate tissues
<i>Shatavari</i> , <i>Ashwagandha</i> , <i>Yashtimadhu</i>	Phytoestrogenic and adaptogenic herbs
Fresh fruits (grapes, dates, pomegranate)	Antioxidant and <i>Rasayana</i> effect
Whole grains, pulses, green leafy vegetables	Provide micronutrients and stability

- ✓ **Avoid:** Spicy, dry, fried, fermented, caffeinated and alcohol-containing foods which aggravate *Vata-Pitta*.

Vihara (Lifestyle Regimen):

- Maintain **regular sleep** and **stress-free routine**.
- Practice **oil massage (*Abhyanga*)** daily with *Bala Taila* or *Ksheerabala Taila*.
- Perform **gentle exercises** like yoga, walking and stretching.
- Avoid suppression of natural urges, excessive fasting and mental strain.

Aushadha Chikitsa (Herbal and Rasayana Therapy):

A. Rasayana Dravyas:

1. *Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)* – Balances *Vata-Pitta*, acts as phytoestrogen, improves bone and uterine health.

2. **Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)** – Adaptogen, relieves stress, insomnia and depression.
3. **Lodhra (*Symplocos racemosa*)** – Restores hormonal balance and reduces uterine inflammation.
4. **Bala (*Sida cordifolia*)** – Rejuvenates, improves muscle strength.
5. **Guduchi (*Tinospora cordifolia*)** – Immunomodulatory and antioxidant.

B. Compound Formulations:

Formulation	Indication
<i>Shatavari Ghrita</i>	Menopausal syndrome, dryness
<i>Kalyanaka Ghrita</i>	Mental instability, depression
<i>Brahmi Vati</i>	Anxiety and insomnia
<i>Chyawanprasha</i>	Rasayana, immunity booster
<i>Ashokarishta</i> ⁹	Uterine tonic, regulates hormones

Panchakarma Therapy:

Panchakarma offers detoxification and rejuvenation.

1. **Abhyanga (Oil Massage)** – Nourishes skin and nerves, pacifies *Vata*.
2. **Swedana (Fomentation)** – Relieves stiffness and fatigue.
3. **Matra Basti (Medicated Enema)** – Administered with *Ksheerabala Taila* or *Dashmoola Taila* for *Vata Shamana* and hormonal balance.
4. **Nasya (Nasal therapy)** – *Anu Taila* or *Brahmi Taila* for mood stabilization and sleep regulation.
5. **Shirodhara** – Continuous oil pouring on forehead using *Ksheerabala Taila* or *Brahmi Taila* reduces anxiety, insomnia and mental agitation.¹⁰

Sattvavajaya Chikitsa (Mental Health Management):

Mental disturbances like irritability, fear and depression are managed by:

- *Pranayama* and *Meditation* to calm *Vata*.
- *Japa*, *Dhyana* and *Bhakti* (spiritual practices) to enhance *Sattva Guna*.

- Counselling, positive thinking and emotional support from family.

Role of Yoga and Meditation:

Yoga harmonizes the neuroendocrine system and reduces stress-induced hormonal imbalance.¹¹

Recommended Practices:

- **Asanas:** *Bhujangasana, Sarvangasana, Halasana, Baddha Konasana, Vajrasana*
- **Pranayama:** *Bhramari, Anuloma Viloma, Sheetal, Nadi Shodhana*
- **Dhyana:** Daily meditation for 20 minutes reduces cortisol levels and enhances mental peace.

Integrative Approach with Modern Medicine:

Modern therapy primarily involves **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)**, which, although effective, carries risks such as breast cancer, stroke and cardiovascular complications.

Ayurveda offers **safer, plant-based alternatives** like:

- Phytoestrogenic herbs (*Shatavari, Ashoka, Lodhra*)
- Antioxidant-rich *Rasayana* formulations
- Non-pharmacological methods (*Yoga, diet and stress management*)

Clinical studies have shown significant relief from menopausal symptoms with *Shatavari, Ashwagandha* and *Bala Taila Basti* without adverse effects.¹²

Discussion:

Menopause should be viewed as a natural transition, not a pathological state. The Ayurvedic perspective offers individualized and preventive strategies focusing on restoring *Dosha* balance and rejuvenating *Dhatus*. By combining *Ahara, Vihara, Aushadhi* and *Rasayana*, Ayurveda provides a comprehensive framework addressing both physical and psychological aspects of menopause.

In contrast to modern medicine's symptomatic treatment, Ayurveda offers long-term benefits promoting longevity and quality of life.

Conclusion:

Menopause symbolizes the transition from reproductive to wisdom phase. Ayurveda's holistic principles aim to make this transition smooth and healthful. By balancing *Vata*, rejuvenating *Dhatus* and nurturing the *Manas*, Ayurveda empowers women to embrace

menopause gracefully. Integrating Ayurvedic wisdom with modern understanding can pave the way for safe, effective and holistic care for menopausal women.

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