

## Simple remedies of Ayurveda to manage Menopausal problems

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### **Abstract:**

Every woman has to undergo a difficult period in her life, the menopause, associated not only with the end of menstruation, but also may be with symptoms such as hot flashes, sweating, dizziness, and palpitation etc which occur due to fluctuations in the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. A knowledge on the probable symptoms that can be encountered is mandatory to every woman which makes it easier for her to accept the same and find out possible solutions. This paper intends to review the possible symptoms during menopause and discusses on some simple remedies described in Ayurveda to combat the same.

**Keywords:** Menopause, Ayurveda, Holistic approach.

### **Introduction:**

Menarche and menopause are the two important phases in the lifespan of every woman which renders her initially to the reproductive and then the non-reproductive state. Menopause is a physiological process that every woman experiences with growing age, due to gradual decline of primordial ovarian follicles. It is defined as the permanent cessation of menstruation or a 12-month amenorrhea after the final menstruation with no other attributable cause.<sup>1</sup> This process of menopause may extend for a longer variable period and may have a negative impact on the general health, psychosocial status and quality of life of a middle-aged woman.<sup>2</sup> The life expectancy of a woman, especially in the mid age is significantly increasing in India. The Population Projections Survey in India reveals that the number of women aged 45 years and above is expected to reach 401 million in 2026 from 96 million at present.<sup>3</sup> Considering the average age of life expectancy of Indian woman as 70 years, these huge numbers of women are expected to spend nearly 25-30 years in a post reproductive period of life.<sup>4</sup> It is generally observed that women develop several diseases like diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, cervical cancer, breast cancer etc in the menopausal age. Furthermore, they experience complex psychosocial problems like depression, mood swings, sleep disorders, loss of social, professional roles, and poor ego integrity. The most burdensome symptoms associated with menopause include hot flashes, profuse sweating, dizziness, and palpitations, which result from drastic fluctuations of

estrogen and progesterone levels.<sup>5</sup> The general health of a female, the condition in which she lives, social functioning and perception of this physiological change along with the acceptance of ageing affect the quality of life during menopause. Research is supportive of the fact that a poor quality of life may account to intense menopausal symptoms.<sup>6</sup> Epidemiological studies reported higher prevalence (40%–60%) of physical, psychological, vasomotor, and sexual disorders among menopausal women and a positive linear relationship between menopausal changes and quality of life.<sup>7</sup> There are several treatment modalities available for menopausal symptoms, but the women do not seek for medical advice considering it as a physiological phenomenon, which further affects their quality of life.

### **Main complaints noticed during menopause:**

Based on the review of several research works, four main categories of symptoms may be linked to menopause-vasomotor symptoms, vaginal dryness/dyspareunia, difficulty in sleeping/insomnia and mood swings.<sup>8-12</sup>

Hot flashes are the commonest symptom affecting almost all the women. Hot flashes are noticed even before the cessation of menstruation and remains for a long time even after menopause.<sup>13</sup> Research are suggestive that the average duration of hot flashes is about 5.2 years.<sup>14</sup> However, these may not be continuous and the intensity may vary from one woman to another. A meta-analysis of 10 different studies involving about 35,445 women revealed an average of 4-year duration of hot flashes, worst symptoms beginning about 1 year before the final menstrual period and declining thereafter.<sup>15</sup> The exact cause of the hot flash is not understood yet. It is hypothesized that when there is decrease in the estrogen production, there is a resetting and narrowing of the thermoregulatory system of the body. There is also an opinion that decreased estrogen levels may reduce serotonin levels and thus up regulate the 5-hydroxytryptamine (serotonin) (5-HT<sub>2A</sub>) receptor in the hypothalamus. As such, additional serotonin is then released, which can cause activation of the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor itself. This activation changes the set point temperature and results in hot flashes.<sup>16</sup>

Estrogen is considered important to maintain the normalcy in the urogenital tissues. Due to the variation in the estrogen levels during and after menopause, the vulvo-vaginal tissues become fragile and may cause distressing symptoms like vaginal dryness or dyspareunia.<sup>17</sup> Atrophy of the vagina occurs resulting in narrowing and shortening of the vagina leading to high rates of dyspareunia (pain during sexual intercourse). Moreover, the urinary tract

contains estrogen receptors in the urethra and bladder. Due to loss of estrogen, patients may experience urinary incontinence (involuntary leakage of urine).<sup>18</sup>

With advanced aging, the quality of sleep generally deteriorates and many at times, menopause seems to worsen the condition. As women enter into the menopausal transition, they report more disturbances in sleeping.<sup>19</sup> Poor sleep hygiene habits and mood disorders contribute further to sleep problems. Women may complain of nighttime awakening and night sweats. Women with mood disorders like anxiety and depression, may experience difficulty falling asleep or early awakening.<sup>20</sup>

Adverse mood is the commonest complaint of women in the menopausal age. Several large prospective cohort studies have shown an increased risk of development of a major depressive episode during this period.<sup>21-22</sup> many at times, symptoms of anxiety have been found to precede depression.<sup>23</sup> Other stressors like changes in her marriage and family structure, children no longer living in the home, changes in career path, taking on new responsibilities as a caregiver to her parents or in-laws may add on to the causing of depression.

Worsening of memory is also an important complaint of female in the menopausal period. Women may notice difficulty remembering names, trouble in planning or with concentration.<sup>24</sup>

One more important feature experienced by women is the musculoskeletal pain including joint pain in most patients.<sup>25</sup> Some researchers opine that estrogen receptors are present in the synovial tissue, and estrogen may play a role in cartilage homeostasis leading to joint pain.<sup>26-27</sup> Osteopenia and osteoporosis are also noticed in menopausal women which increase the risk of bone fractures. The estrogen deficient state of menopause results in increased bone resorption and rapid bone loss.<sup>28</sup>

Ayurveda is a science of life which gives importance not only to the treatment of disease, but also emphasises on the maintenance of health in a healthy person. According to the concepts of Ayurveda, every physiological or pathological state is produced as a result of the three bodily bio humours, namely- vata, pitta and kapha. The range of symptoms in menopause are wide, and these symptoms may be expressed as produced due to dominance of either of these dosas. Symptoms like anxiety, mood swings, nervousness, vaginal dryness, loss of skin tone, irregular

menstruation, insomnia, bloating and joint pain may be attributed to vatadosa. Symptoms like hot flashes, irritability, anger, night sweats, heavy periods or excessive bleeding, urinary tract infections etc may be due to the dominance of pitta dosa, whereas symptoms like weight gain, lethargy, laziness, depression, lacking motivation etc may be attributed to the kaphadosa.

Ayurveda emphasis on the concept of maintainance of health. Menopause is an expected transition in every females life. In about 40 years, a person usually has the dominance of vata in the body and moves into the state of dhatukshaya or depletion of the dhatus in the body. The symptoms occurring during menopause is hence a collective symptomatology produced due to vitiated dosa and a particular dhatukshaya. For instance, the kshaya or depletion in the rasa dhatu may result in dry skin or wrinkling of the skin, mild or occasional vaginal dryness, feeling of weakness and tiredness or hot flashes, mamsadhatukshaya leading to constant muscle aches or easily fatigued muscles, medodhatukshaya leading to frequent sweating, asthidhatukshaya leading to low bone density, constant joint pains or arthritic conditions, deep pains in the bones. Kshaya in the majjadhatu leads to inability to focus or concentrate or dizziness. ShukraDhatu&ArtavaUpdhatukshaya results in end of reproductive life, severe vaginal dryness, overall lack of sexual attractiveness & affection.<sup>29</sup> Overall depletion of all the seven dhatus is hence noticed in this period which in turn is responsible for the depletion of the ojus- the vital energy of the body responsible for the immune system, thus making way for several pathologies. Hence, it is important to have a better understanding of the expected common symptoms in menopausal women which will aid in its prevention, detection, and timely treatment.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs) are the method of choice to treat the symptoms produced by menopause, in the allopathic system of medicine.<sup>30</sup> These may have beneficial short term use; however, HRT has been associated with an increased risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, heart attacks, strokes, increased risk of gallbladder disease, blood clots in the legs and lungs, as well as urinary leakage.<sup>31</sup> SERMs have been shown to increase the risk of breast cancer when administered over five years or more; they have also been shown to increase uterine cancer, coagulopathies, depression, impaired memory, as well as hot flashes.<sup>32</sup>

Ayurveda propagates a holistic approach to menopause emphasising on establishing a planned daily routine, a well planned diet suited for body constitution following of healthy

procedures like abhyanga, yoga, pranayama etc and use of herbs to establish long-term balance within the body and mind along with life-style modification<sup>33</sup>. Table.1 depicts the use of certain Ayurvedic formulations which may be used in case of the symptoms of menopause.

S.No.	Symptoms	Ayurvedic Formulations
1.	Hot flashes	Bala-ShatavaryadiKashaya. Chandra PrabhaVati Kamadugha rasa
2.	Vaginal dryness	Trivritsneha, Jatyaditaila etc used locally
3.	Disturbance in sleep	Saraswatharishta, TungadrumadiTailam for application on head.
4.	Adverse mood	KalyanakaGhrita, Manasamitravatakametc
5.	Worsening of memory	Brahmivati, Medhyavati etc
6.	Musculoskeletal pain	Ashwagandhachoorana, Balarishtaetc
7.	Osteopenia and osteoporosis	KukkudandatwakBhasma, Pravalapishti, Shankabhasmaetc
8.	Urinary complaints	Chandraprbahavati, Vishatindukavati.

Table.2 depicts the use of certain single herbs of Ayurveda either in choorna (powder), swarasa (Fresh Juice), kalka (Pastes) or kashaya(Decoction) form which may be used either to prevent or minimize the symptoms of menopause.

S.No.	Herb	Botanical name
1.	Bala	Sidacordifolia
2.	Ashwagandha	Withaniasomnifera
3.	Draksha	Vitisvinifera
4.	Shatavari	Asparagus racemosus
5.	Kumari	Aloe vera
6.	Mandookaparni	CentellaAsiatica
7.	Brahmi	Bacopamonnieri
8.	Tagara	Valerianawallichii

9.	Shallaki	Boswelliaserrata
10.	Asathishrinkala	CissusQuadrangularis
11.	Gokshura	Tribulusterrestris
12.	Guduchi	Tinosporacordifolia
13.	Usheera	Vetiveriazizanioides
14.	Chandana	Santalum album
15.	Arjuna	Terminaliaarjuna

The above mentioned drugs must be used only after expert advice from an expert as their use and dose varies based on condition and coexisting diseases like hypertension, diabetes etc which is common in the menopausal age.

Asanas like Pavanmuktasana, Bhujangasana, Suptvajrasana, Shavasana, Ardhamatyendrasana, Trikonasana, Bhujangasana etc and pranayama techniques also help develop a healthier life and keep away the symptoms of menopause. Constant meditation and vyayama or exercise also help to keep oneself calm and relaxed.

Mild cleansing of the body regularly with shodhana therapies explained in Ayurveda using Panchakarma helps to free the toxins of the body. This is to be followed with use of Rasayana. Commonly used Rasayana yogas in this period include Drakshavaleha, Shatavariguda, Ashwagandhaavaleha, Ajamamsarasaya etc which must be consumed with expert advice.

### **Conclusion:**

Each phase of one's life is beautiful and should be accepted with courage and determination. Menopause is not a disease, but a physiological change happening in a life of every female. Ayurveda offers an array of methods for a safe and happy transition into menopause. The basic concept of Ayurveda is "Swasthasyaswastyarakshanam and aturasyavikaraprasamanam" which means maintenance of health in a healthy and treatment of ailment in a diseased. The principles of Ayurveda explained above offers great relief to a woman during the menopausal phase. Hence a knowledge regarding the same is helpful in the life of every woman.

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