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Ayurveda treatment in menopausal weight gain, a critical review

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Abstract:

Menopause, a change in life of women, is the ending of a woman's monthly menstrual period and ovulation. It includes alongside several other changes in the body and mind, brought in due to a decline in the amount of the hormones estrogen and progesterone being produced by the body. In Ayurveda the context of menopause is Rajonivriti. Rajonivriti Janya Lakshana is a group of symptoms produced by degenerative changes in the body. In Ayurveda, Menopausal symptom is regarded as imbalance of the Dosha [Vata, Pitta, Kapha] and Dhatushaya which occurs as a natural & gradual consequence of aging. Vata Dosha dominance is seen in the later stage of life. Ayurveda, the science of life, advocates a holistic treatment of Menopausal syndrome by modification of diet & life style, utilizing various herbs and minerals and offers a reliable option to the conventional treatment. Here Ayurveda treatment for menopause weight gain includes correcting hormonal imbalance with appropriate diet, Shamana therapy, Shodhana - Panchakarma therapy, Rasayan therapy and Yoga. Here a critical review is done in context of the study.

Keywords: Rajonivriti, Shodhana - Panchakarma therapy, Shamana therapy.

Introduction:

In today's world, menopause presents several challenges for women, both physically and emotionally. The lack of awareness and open conversation around menopause can make it difficult for women to seek the support they need. Many women suffer in silence, as menopause symptoms like hot flashes, night sweats, and mood swings are often misunderstood or dismissed, leading to a lack of proper treatment. The age of menopause is also changing owing to the change in one's lifestyle. This results in many health issues which are termed as menopausal syndrome. Common physical symptoms of menopausal syndrome include hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, and irregular periods. Hot flashes, which are sudden feelings of intense heat, often result in sweating and can disrupt daily activities and sleep. It also includes major effect of decreased bone health and

increased weight.

Emotional and psychological symptoms often accompany physical changes. Mood swings, irritability, anxiety, and depression are common, largely due to fluctuating hormone levels. Sleep disturbances, often linked to night sweats, further contribute to irritability and fatigue, compounding emotional challenges.

Other potential symptoms include memory lapses, decreased libido, and joint pain. As women move into postmenopausal, many of these symptoms may subside, but the risk of long-term health issues such as osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease increases due to the lower levels of estrogen and increased weight.

Rajonivriti is the *Ayurvedic* term for menopause, referring to the natural cessation of menstruation in women, typically occurring between the age of 50 years. The term is derived from *Rajah*, meaning menstrual flow, and *Nivriti*, meaning cessation. The vitiation of *Dosha* causes degenerative changes which are related to aging process. Decrease in metabolism, increased tissue flaccidity and increase in body weight along with fatigue are prime symptoms encountered during this period.

The Factors which are responsible for Weight Gain during Menopause can be brief as follows. In accordance to modern science the factors are,

Hormonal Changes – the redistribution of fat occurs with the decline in levels of estrogen. The fat starts accumulate around waist, hip and thigh region.

Metabolism - Metabolism tends to slow down with age, which can make it easier to gain weight and more difficult to lose it. Faulty food habits are also equally responsible for the slow down or bad metabolic health.

Muscle Loss - Muscle mass decrease with age if not actively maintained through exercise. Muscle burns more calories at rest than fat, so a loss of muscle can lead to weight gain.

Stress – on mental plane there is lot of disturbance and confusion. This leads to stress buildup. This results in accumulation of stress at mental level leading to chronic stress which triggers overeating and weight gain.

In Ayurveda the term *Rajonivriti* is used to state the onset of menopause. This is a time occurrence phase, and is not described as any diseased conditions or any symptoms related to any disease. During this phase weight is put on due to above mentioned reasons and here many women struggle to shed those extra pounds during the per menopause and menopause stages. However, Ayurveda, with its holistic approach to health and wellness, offers a natural and effective solution.

Ayurvedic treatment for menopause focuses on helping women navigate this transitional phase of life with minimal discomfort and a balanced overall well-being. Ayurveda for Menopause is considered a natural process, and *Ayurvedic* remedies for menopause aim to address symptoms like weight gain,

hot flashes, mood swings, and hormonal changes. The therapies which can be adopted for the mentioned reasons are as follows.

Shamana therapy –

Shamana Chikitsa is one of the two primary treatment approaches in Ayurveda, focusing on pacifying imbalances in the body and mind. The term *Shamana* means to calm, soothe, or balance, and *Chikitsa* means treatment. *Shamana Chikitsa* involves the use of herbal medicines, dietary adjustments, lifestyle modifications, and therapeutic measures to alleviate symptoms caused by an imbalance in the *Dosha* (*Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha*). The herbs and medications which can be used for this reason are, herbs like *Shatavari*, *Ashwagandha*, *Gokshura*, *Kokilaksha*, *Latakaranja* etc. formulations like *Chandraprabha vati*, *Ashokarishta*, *Kukutanda twak Bhasma*, *Shatavari Ghruta*, *Dadimadi Ghruta*, *Triphala Guggulu*, *Shilajit* etc.

Shodhana therapy -

Panchakarma Chikitsa is physical therapies that thoroughly cleanse and purify the physical and mental impurities from the body and mind. The vitiated *Dhosha* are detoxified and removed by the virtue of *Pancha Karma* procedures like *Virechana*, *Basti*, *Nasya* and *Raktamokshana*. This treatment is particularly valuable for addressing metabolic issues like obesity, arthritis, diabetes, and hormonal imbalances. Detoxifying your liver and boosting your metabolism can help in Weight loss. Other therapies inculcated in *Ayurvedic Treatment for Menopause* involves herbal fat-burning massages, rejuvenating steam baths, and *Basti*-enema therapies also contribute to muscle toning, stress reduction, and effective weight loss.

Yoga therapy -

Yoga is a safe and excellent form of exercise suitable for individuals of all ages. Beyond aiding in weight loss, *Yoga* enhances flexibility and, when practiced regularly and correctly, helps build lean muscle. By practicing various *Yoga Asana* one can balance the hormones and also pacify the vitiated *Dosha*. The *Yoga* postures – *Asana* which can be adopted are, *Suryanamaskara*, *Bhujangasana*, *Tadasana*, *Shalabhasana*, *Trikonasana*, *Pawanmuktasana* etc. along with *Yoga*, *Pranayama* and meditation techniques helps to calm the mind and also helps to detoxify the body there by helps in overall improvement in one's metabolism. *Pranayama* like *Kapalbhati*, *Bhastrika*, *Nadi Shodhana* etc. helps boost metabolism, aiding in weight loss, reducing stress and anxiety.

Dinacharya – daily routine

One has to follow a healthy lifestyle and clean dietary habits. Observing one's own body for its needs of food, water and sleep at appropriate time helps to pacify the underlying problems. Moderation in diet along with timely food intake of freshly cooked food is of prime importance with respect to *Dosha* vitiation.

Naturopathy –

Use of natural resources for the purpose of balancing physical as well as mental health aids the treatment undertaken for it. Early day sun bath, water therapy, mud therapy etc. can be used for balancing the vitiated *Dosha* and *Pancha Mahabhuta*. This helps in gaining natural tone of body and check ageing process.

Inference:

Ever-increasing health issues at menopausal phase can be rightly addressed with holistic treatment of *Ayurveda*. Treatment for Menopause combines *Ayurvedic* therapies, a balanced diet, and lifestyle changes; it results in sustainable and holistic weight management. The use of various medications under *Shamana* therapy, implementation of *Panchakarma* therapy for detoxification, following *Dinacharya* and practicing *Yoga – Pranayama* helps to tackle symptoms of menopause and manage weight.

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