

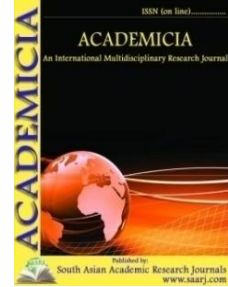


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MENOPAUSE: TRANSITION PERIOD IN WOMAN'S LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Menopause is an important phase of woman's life that occurs after 45 years of age. In this period women face lots of problematic symptoms which disturb their daily life. The present study was planned and conducted on 150 women of different age groups. A self-structured interview schedule was used for collecting information regarding their complaints both physical and psychological. Data were analyzed for frequency of symptoms and comparison was made in different age groups. The results revealed that prominent symptoms of menopause faced by women vary in different age groups, but every woman had unique experience of this phase with variation of occurrence. Onset of menopause was mostly between 40-44 years, but sometimes these symptoms continue in their later life also. The discomfort situation was controlled by using different practices like exercise, healthy diet, therapy and doctor's advice.

KEYWORDS: Menopause, symptoms, Women life.

INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a normal change in a woman's life characterized by cessation of menstruation. That's why some people call menopause "the change of life". During menopause a woman's body slowly produces less of the hormones estrogen and progesterone. The average age of menopause is 51, but for some women it happens as early as 40 or as late as 55. A woman has reached menopause when she has not had a period for 12 months in a row. During the time of the menopausal transition (perimenopause), periods can stop for a while and then start again due to some illness which is not menopause. Menopause can create anxiety in women if they are scanty and irregular, since they have fear of pregnancy.

During perimenopause a woman will have changes in levels of two female hormones i.e. estrogen and progesterone, . These changes may lead to symptoms like hot flushes, irritability etc. Some symptoms can last for months or years after her period stops. There is no way to tell in advance how long it will take one to go through the menopausal transition. It could take between two and eight years.

Menopause affects every woman differently as follows:

- **IRREGULAR PERIODS:** Periods become scanty & irregular, last more days or fewer, and be lighter or heavier. Sometime this is due to pregnancy or other medical causes so one is required to be careful if there had not been a menstrual period for a year and 'spotting' observed must consult a doctor. Spotting could be caused by cancer or other health conditions.
- **HOT FLUSHES:** These are a sudden feeling of heat in the upper part of body, mostly face and neck may become red. Red blotches may appear on chest, back, and arms. Heavy sweating and cold shivering can follow.
- **SLEEPING PROBLEMS:** Women are mostly having sleeping problems with night sweats, hot flushes etc. Females also feel exhausted during the day.
- **VAGINAL AND URINARY PROBLEMS:** These problems may start or increase in the time around menopause. The walls of vagina may get drier and thinner because of lower levels of the hormone estrogen. Less estrogen leads to more vaginal infections or urinary tract infections and sexual incompatibility. Some women find it hard to hold their urine long enough (which is called urinary urge incontinence). Urine might also leak out while sneezing, coughing or laughing (called urinary stress incontinence).
- **MOOD SWINGS:** Mood changes at this time also could be due to stress, family changes, or tiredness. Mood swings are not the same as depression. Female feel crazy, or have crying spells.
- **CHANGED FEELINGS ABOUT SEX:** Some women may be less interested in sex leading to sexual incompatibility, while others may feel comfortable with their sexuality after menopause.

- **OSTEOPOROSIS:** This is a condition in which bones get thin and weak. It can lead to loss of height and fractures occur frequently.
- **OTHER CHANGES:** Women might become forgetful or have trouble focusing, waist size could increase, have loose muscle and gain fat. Joints and muscles could become stiff and achy.

These symptoms are more challenging but if women are well aware about these challenges they can easily cope up with this situations. Women can live better if they change their life style with the Natural/alternative treatments. The following life styles can be improved in women health in the years around menopause:

- **EAT WELL:** Menopausal women might need more extra requirement of calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B and iron supplements, along with balanced and healthy diet.
- **BE ACTIVE:** Exercise can help bones, heart, mood, and more. So the right activity at right time is essential.
- **QUIT SMOKING:** Smoking affect health in many ways, including damaging of lungs and bones. So one needs to stay away from second hand smoke.
- **TAKE CARE OF GYNECOLOGICAL HEALTH:** Women need certain tests like a pelvic examination after menopause. Depending on the health history, doctor's advice must be required. Also, remember to undergo breast examination i.e. mammograms (breast x-rays). They also may need to consult a specialist for some specific problems, like an urogynecologist for urinary incontinence.
- **DOCTOR'S ADVICE ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS AND SCREENINGS:** Blood pressure, bone density, and other tests with doctors must be discussed.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess menopausal symptoms among women of different age groups.
2. To assess changes in life styles of women during menopause.

MEASURING TOOLS

The present observational, cross sectional study included women from different parts of Jaipur city, Rajasthan, India. Total 150 menopausal women were enrolled and were categorized in three age groups viz-a-viz 40-44 years (n=50), 45-50 years (n=50) and above 50 years (n =50). Self-structured interview schedule was used to interview women in their menopause phase. Information regarding their complaints both physical and psychological were gathered and analyzed. Each item was read out and the women were asked whether they experienced the symptom mentioned. Data were analyzed for frequency of symptoms and were comparison was made in women of different age groups. **Statistical analysis:** Data were analyzed using computer software Microsoft Excel for Windows and results presented as percentages.

RESULTS**TABLE 1 . DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MENOPAUSAL WOMEN**

S.No.	Characteristics	40-44 years (n=50)		45-50 years (n=50)		above 50 years (n =50)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Marital status	50	100	43	86	42	84
	Married						
	Divorced/Widowed	0	0	7	14	8	16
2	Education status	48	96	42	84	40	80
	Literate						
	Illiterate	2	4	8	16	10	20
3	Sexual activity	50	100	50	100	50	100
	Active						
	Inactive	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Dietary life style	38	76	40	80	35	70
	Veg						
	Non-veg	12	24	10	20	15	30
	Alcohol	0	0	2	4	1	2
	Coffee & Tea	50	100	48	96	50	100
	Smoking	5	10	2	4	3	6
	Tobacco chewing	3	6	6	12	5	10
5	Affected by Menopause	32	64	36	72	29	58
	Negative manner						
	Not affected	18	36	14	28	21	42

The table no I show the data regarding basic demographic profile of respondents and concluded that majority of the respondents had married in all groups; only 14% and 16 % were widows in 45-50years and above 50 years group respectively. Maximum no i.e. 80 to 90 percent of women were literate but in the age group above 50 years 20% respondents were illiterate. All the respondents were sexually active but frequencies of this activity varied in different groups. 80% respondents from 45-50years were vegetarian as in comparison to other group. On the other side coffee & tea were the main practices adopted by all respondents very frequently. 64%, 72% and 58% respondents from each sequential group were affected by menopause in negative manner.

TABLE 2 . SYMPTOMS DURING MENOPAUSE

S.No.	Symptoms	40-44 years (n=50)		45-50 years (n=50)		above 50 years (n =50)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Irregular periods.	40	80	45	90	29	58
	• More often						
	• Lighter	32	64	5	10	18	36
	• Heavier	18	36	0	0	3	6
2	Hot flashes.	23	46	12	24	32	64
	• Sudden feeling of heat in the upper part or all of body.						
	• Red face and neck	22	44	31	62	34	68
	• Red blotches on chest, back, and arms.	12	24	27	54	21	42
	• Heavy sweating and cold shivering	34	68	20	40	23	46
3	Sleeping problem.	12	24	34	68	43	86
4	Vaginal and urinary problems.	34	68	42	84	30	60
	• Vaginal infections or urinary tract infections.						

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to hold urine long enough (urinary urge incontinence). 	12	24	35	70	43	86
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leakage of Urine when sneeze, cough, or laugh (urinary stress incontinence). 	30	60	28	56	40	80
5	Frequent Mood changes.	7	14	12	24	32	64
6	Changing feelings about sex.	7	14	13	26	22	44
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically uncomfortable 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically comfortable 	43	86	37	74	28	56
7	Osteoporosis.	1	2	7	14	30	60
8	Other changes.	23	46	24	48	38	76
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgetful 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble focusing, 	2	4	4	8	12	24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waist become larger, lose muscle 	34	68	45	90	29	58
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain fat 	12	24	25	50	20	40
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stiff and achy joints/muscles 	11	22	34	68	43	86

Table 2 deals with different symptoms of menopause which commonly occur creating complications in women's life. The data show separately for each group 40-44 years, 45-50 years and above 50 years.

80% Women from 40-44 years of age group faced irregular periods more often, 46% agree with Hot flushes i.e. sudden feeling of heat in the upper part or all of body most commonly. 24 % women had sleeping problems during this time. Vaginal infections are very common in 60- 80 % women. Mood swings are very common for all groups but in above 50 yrs women are more frequent i.e. 64% than other. Respondents feel physically comfortable in their sexual activity during menopause as they are in early years. With the age sexual activity becomes less comfortable. The condition of osteoporosis is also gradually increased with the age. About 60% women from above 50 yrs. have suffered with osteoporosis. Some other changes like

forgetfulness, waist size larger and Stiff and achy joints/muscles are also gradually increase as women grow older.

Symptoms increase very dominantly with increasing age in each sequential group. 10% women face light & irregular menstrual flow and 62 % women had red faces and neck very frequently, also they have red blotches on chest and lower body parts. Sleeping problems were also observed with the increasing age of women i.e. older age group women have more sleeping disturbances than younger. Vaginal infections are very common during this time but about 70% respondents felt hard to control urine.

Women above 50 years could identify & control these symptoms very easily because by this time women were almost adjusted with the phase of menopause. Hot flushes and sleeping problems were very common but frequency of sexual activities reduced.

TABLE 3. CHANGING LIFE STYLES OF MENOPAUSAL WOMEN

S.No.	Changing behavior and practices	40-44 years (n=50)		45-50 years (n=50)		above 50 years (n =50)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Eat well and balanced diet	40	80	38	76	42	84
2	Be active (Exercise)	43	86	44	88	44	88
3	Quit smoking	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Take care of gynecological health.	12	24	23	46	30	60
5	Doctor's advice	10	20	24	48	34	68

The above said table 3 depicted that more than 76% respondents practiced, 'eat well and be active' life style in all age groups. The women said that they focus on healthy and balanced diet to cope up with discomfort during menopause. None of the respondents was in favor of smoking. 46% and 60% respondents from 45-50 years and above 50 years were taking care of gynecological health but only 24% of women between 40-44 years were conscious about gynecological health. It was encouraging to find that 68% women above 50 years were very prompt to take doctor's advice as compared to women of other age groups.

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