

International Research Journal of Ayurveda & Yoga

Vol. 6 (7),67-71, July,2023

ISSN: 2581-785X : <https://irjay.com/>

DOI: [10.47223/IRJAY.2023.6710](https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2023.6710)



A Critical Review of Herbs for Geriatric Women.

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Article Info

Article history:

Received on: 12-06-2023

Accepted on: 20-07-2023

Available online: 31-07-2023

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ABSTRACT:

Ayurveda links menopause with ageing. Ageing is a *Vata* predominant stage of life. In Ayurvedic texts, *Aacharya Sushruta* has described it is a normal physiology. And hence no any specific treatment is mentioned for the same. Geriatric care includes the promotion of health and longevity and management of diseases occurring in old age. It is also concerned with sustained, comfortable and healthy ageing. Thus, geriatric care has to address to two-fold problems, firstly the basic anti-ageing care to retard the rate of physiological ageing and secondly the medical management of diseases and disorders specifically occurring in the old age such as heart discomfort, sleep disturbances, mood swings, irritability, Anxiety, physical and mental exhaustion, bladder problems, vaginal dryness, joint and muscular disorders. Hence geriatric care wants management of *Agni*, *Bala*, *Dosha* and *Oja*. *Oja* is responsible for *Bala* and much important processing for ageing. various researches have been reviewed for herbs in geriatric care and found that in Many herbs mentioned in texts which are used for prolongation of Ayu along with increase in *Medha* and *Bala* and to arrest the process of ageing i.e., *Vaya sthapana Gana*, *Jivneeya Gana*, *Shatavari*, *Ashwagndha*, *Guduchi*, *Aamlaki*. Most of the *Dravya's* are *Medhya*, *Rasayana* and *Balya* among them which can be useful in management of geriatric women.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, Menopause, Geriatric, Herbs

INTRODUCTION

With demographic transition underway in India, the elderly population is projected to rise to 12% of the total population by 2025.¹The ever-increasing elderly population poses social and financial challenges and puts immense strain on the health system due to marked shift toward chronic non-communicable diseases. Besides, social factors like fewer children in each family, increased

employment opportunities for women, who were traditionally taking care of the old in India, rapid urbanization and rise of nuclear families call for more focus on geriatric issues, both medical and socio-economic. The elderly in India is a heterogeneous population with variations in morbidity across several variables like gender, location and socioeconomic status, as well as wide



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diversity in culture and religion. At least 65% of India's old live in rural areas and are illiterate and economically dependent.^{2,3} Thus, there is a need to address the medical and socio-economic problems of this vulnerable group and promote healthy ageing.

In India, the elderly suffers from dual burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases besides impairment of special sensory functions like vision and hearing and other degenerative diseases. Poor geographical access and high cost of treatment also lead to poor utilization of health care especially among the elderly.⁴

Ayurveda links menopause with aging. Aging is an inevitable phenomenon taking place in all living beings. Aging is *Vata* predominant stage of life. So, the symptoms of menopause as similar as old age because old age *Vata* dosha also rises & upsets the normal balance of the body. *Vata* type menopausal symptoms are depression, insomnia, anxiety. *Pitta* type symptoms are angry & hot flashes, burning micturition. *Kapha* type symptom weight gain, feeling of mental & physical heaviness, vaginal discharge etc. Ayurvedic science has divided all diseases into 4 major types. *Agantuja*, *Sharira*, *Manas* and *Swabhavika*¹. Concentrating on 'Swabhavika' type; it is described that this type includes all those conditions, which are naturally occurring. Acharya Sushruta has mentioned a group of naturally occurring diseases under the heading of *Swabhavabala Pravritta* includes *Kshudha* (Hunger). *Pipasa* (Thirst), *Nidra* (Sleep), *Jara* (Ageing) and *Mrityu* (Death)⁴. Although these diseases are naturally occurring diseases, but sometimes they are being acquired also. which is described as "*Doshaja*". So, they are further divided into two types viz. *Kalakrita* and *Akalakrita*.⁵

Rajonivritti is a naturally occurring condition in every woman as that of *Jaravastha* etc. *Swabhavika Vyadhies*. Hence geriatric care wants management of *Vata*, *Agni*, *Bala*, *Dosha* and *Oja*. Ayurveda has ejected a separate branch for geriatric health care – '*Jara Tantra*' or '*Jara Chikitsa*'.⁶

Geriatrics is defined as department of medicine dealing especially with the problems of ageing and disease of elderly. It aims to promote health and to prevent and treat diseases & disabilities in older women.

AIMS/OBJECTIVE

To analyses and compile the herbs stated in all ayurvedic classics related to geriatric care.

MATERIAL & METHOD

All the material & data are collected from Ayurvedic Samhita, research papers, PubMed, Elsevier etc. Search engines.

Features in Geriatric women

- **Features of *Vata-Vridhhi* in old age** – *Kayaparushtha*, *Karshya*, *Gatrasfurana*, *Nidranasha*, *Alpabalatvam*⁷
- **Features of *Dosha, Dhatu* and *Mala Kshaya* in old age** – *Mandachesta* (slowness of physical and mental activities), *Apraharsh* (unsatisfying nature), *Mudhasangyata* (slowness of perception and resolution), *Nishprabhava* (loss of lusture), *Rukshata* (dryness and wasting), *Sandhisaitihilya* (instability of joints), *Manoshunyata* (lack of ideation), *Shram* (easy fatigability), *Shirashaitihilya* (prominent and tortuous blood), *Sfeek*, *Greeva*, *Udar Shuskata* (wasting of muscles), *Asthi Shosha* (degenerative bone disease), *Klaibya* (erectile dysfunctions and sterility).⁸

- **Features of *Oja Kshaya* in old women** -*Durbalata* (General debility), *Rukshata* (dryness of skin) *Vyathitendriya* (diminished capacities of *indriyas*), *Duschaya* (lack of luster), *Durmana* (decreased mental capacities).

Disorders in Geriatric women^{9,10}

- **Disorder of Gastro intestinal system**- Decrease Gastric acidity-B12 deficiency, Iron deficiency anemia, Decrease Colon motility, Fecal impaction, Decrease Anorectal function, Fecal incontinence, Prolapse of uterus.
- **Disorder of Renal System**- Urinary tract infection, Nephropathy Distended bladder, Incontinence which may be dueto Diabetic, Detrusor overactivity.
- **Disorder of Genito-Urinary System**- Vaginal/Urethral, Mucosal atrophy, Senile Vaginitis, yellow white discharge, Prolapse of uterus, urethra, bladder, Intestine due to weakness of muscle, Dyspareunia (painful coitus)
- **Disorder of Musculo Skeleton System** - Osteo Arthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Muscle wasting
- **Disorder of Nervous System** – hyper/hypo Reflexes of upper/lower motor neuron disorders, Parkinsonism due to decreased dopaminergic synthesis.
- **Disorder of Endocrine System** - Impaired Glucose tolerance causes Diabetes Mellitus, Thyroxine-Thyroid Dysfunction, less Vitamin D absorption cause osteomalacia, loss of libido
- **Disorder of Psychology**- Mild degree of dementia usually retain their social graces and may mask intellectual impairment, dysfunction of cognitive status i.e.,

Identifying of person, object, self, Early awakening, sleep apnea tension or continuous thinking on solved/unsolved topics, delirium.

Herbs useful in geriatric care

1. **Amalaki** (*Emblica Officinalis*) -act as immunomodulator, Aphrodisiac, reduce hyper acidity and burning sensation, improve vision and used in diabetes, bleeding disorders etc¹¹.

2. **Arjun** (*Terminalia Arjuna*)—act as Cardiac Tonic, promotes bone fracture healing, healing of wounds, and used in obesity, diabetes etc.¹²

3. **Ashwagandha** (*Withania Somnifera*)- act as immunomodulator, aphrodisiac, antistress, and used in general debility, insomnia, tuberculosis etc.¹³

4. **Asthisambara** (*Cissus Quadrangularis*)— used in digestive disorders, ophthalmic disorders, fractures, joint dislocations, haemorrhoids, tastelessness, colic & skin related disease etc.¹⁴

5. **Apamarga** (*Chyranthus Aspera*)— act as diuretic & anti emetic, used in tastelessness, flatulence, haemorrhoids, colicky pain, fistula in ano, fever, Asthma etc.¹⁵

6. **Brahmi** (*Bacopa Monnieri*)—act as intellect promoting & memory enhancer, cardio tonic, increase digestive capacity, used in dementia, skin disease, fever, anemia, bronchitis etc.

7. **Bala** (*Sida Cordifolia*) –act as tonic immunomodulator, used in disorders of *Vata* and urinary tract.

8. **Guduchi** (*Tinospora Cordifolia*)- act as rejuvenator, expectorant, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic, used in diabetes, anemia, jaundice, diarrhea, dysentery, gout etc¹⁶.

9. **Eranda** (*Ricinus Communis*)— act as aphrodisiac, purgative (oil), pacifies *Vata*, used in rheumatoid arthritis, pain in urinary bladder, backache, abdominal disorders etc.

10. **Gokshura** (*Tribulus Terrestris*)— act as diuretic, litholytic, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulator aphrodisiac, used in cough, dyspnoea, renal calculi, diabetes, general debility, cardiac disorders etc.

11. **Gugglu** (*Comiphora Wightii*)— act as anti-inflammatory, immunomodulator, promotes bones fracture & healing, pacifies *Vata*, used in obesity, diabetes, skin disorders etc.¹⁷

12. **Haritaki** (*Terminalia Chebula*) – act as laxative, stomachic, digestive purgative, immunomodulator, cardio tonic, nervine tonic, used in constipation, indigestion, abdominal lump, hemorrhoids, edema, skin disease etc.

13. **Haridra** (*Curcuma Longa*) act as appetizer, stomachic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anti poisonous, promotes complexion, used in diabetes, skin disease, wounds,

anemia, urticaria, rhinitis, cough etc.

14. **Hingu** (*Ferula Asafoetida*)— act as digestive, carminative, cardiac tonic, used in distension of abdomen.

15. **Jatamansi** (*Nardostachys Jatamansi*)- having digestive, carminative, stomachic, nervine tonic, sedative properties.

16. **Kantakari** (*Solanum Saurattens*)- act as anti-inflammatory, used in cough, dyspnea, fever, hoarseness of voice.

17. **Kundaru** (exudation of *Shallaki*) (*Boswellia Serrata*)— disorders of *Vata*, used in rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory disease.

18. **Lahsuna** (*Allium Sativam*)— act as expectorant, used in chronic fever, cough, dyspnea, disorder of *Vata*, hypercholesterolemia.

19. **Mandukaparni** (*Centella Asiatica*)- act as nervine tonic, cardiogenic, used in insomnia, cardiac debility, asthma, fever, bronchitis.

20. **Meshashringi** (*Gymnema Sylvestre*)—used in diabetes, skin disease, cough, worm infestation. wounds, dysuria, dyspnea.

21. **Narikela** (*Cocos Nusifera*) – act as diuretic, used in burning sensation.

22. **Nirgundi** (*Vitex Nirgundo*)— anti-inflammatory, anti-poisonous, used in rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis.

23. **Pippali** (*Piper Longum*) – having digestive, stomachic, expectorant properties, used in dyspnea, cough. disorder of spleen, diabetes.¹⁸

24. **Punarnava** (*Boerhavia Diffusa*)— act as diuretic, immunomodulator, cardiogenic, hepatoprotective, used in disorders of liver and spleen, anemia, fever, dyspnea.

25. **Pushkarmula** (*Inula Racemose*)— act as stomachic, digestive, anti-inflammatory, carminative, used in intercostal neuralgia, hiccough, cough. anemia, fever.

26. **Salparni** (*Dasmodium Gangeticum*) – act as immunomodulator, aphrodisiac, cardiogenic, anti-poisonous, used in fever, diabetes, vomiting, hypertension, generalized body pain.

27. **Sarpagandha** (*Rauwolfia Serpentina*) – used in hypertension, insomnia.

28. **Satavari** (*Asparagus Racemosus*) -immunomodulator, aphrodisiac, cardiogenic, used in urinary tract disorders, bleeding disorders, hyperacidity.

29. **Shunthi** (*Zingiber Officinale*)- act as digestant, carminative, anti-oxidant, anti-hypercholesteremic, used in flatulence, dyspnea, Rheumatoid arthritis

30. **Tagar** (*Valeriana Wallichii*)— act as Stomachic, hypnotic, sedative, nervine tonic, used in insomnia, epilepsy, neuralgia.

31. *Varuna* (*Crataeva Nurvala*) – act as litholytic, used in dysuria, abdominal lump.

32. *Vidari* (*Pueraria Tuberosa*) – act as immunomodulator, used in bleeding disorders.

33. *Yasthimadhu* (*Glycyrrhiza Glabra*) – act as tonic, intellect promoting, immunomodulator, used in hyperdypsia, cough, bronchitis, hoarseness of voice.¹⁹

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda considers aging as *Nishpratikiya* and *Swabhavbala Roga* (natural disease). As the age advances there is gradual diminution in the qualities of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Agni* and *Oja*. Drugs having *Rasayana*, *Deepana*, *Pachana*, *Medhya*, *Balya*, *Vayasthapana* properties help in pacifying *Dhatukshaya Janya Lakshana*, *Vata-Pitta Doshahara*, *Srotoshodhana*, and the process of formation of *Dhatu* is benefited and ultimately resulting in delayed aging process and related complications. Also, the herbs of *vayasthapana gana* have *rasayana* property which helps in overall nourishment of *dhatu*. *Rasayana* drugs possess strong antioxidant property. Acharya Charka has given unique importance to *vayasthapana mahakshaya* for maintaining vitality and managing ageing and its allied ill effects. Some herbs like *Shatavari* and *Kumari* mentioned above are mainly helpful in gynecological conditions in geriatric women. Altogether, the herbs enumerated here are rejuvenate, carminative, digestive, liver stimulants and tissue replenishers. So, these herbs are effective in various geriatric health issues and in degenerative joint disorders as well as neuromuscular disorders. They use substance now as phytoestrogens that are estrogen like substance derived from plants, they mimic the action of estrogen in the body but are free from their side effects. Above mentioned drug having same properties so these drugs can be helpful in reducing ageing symptoms.

CONCLUSION

According to Ayurveda, 45-55 years of age are a critical decade. They provide the foundation on which subsequent health is established. Degree of concern in this decade and consequent life style changes determine the grace of future life and its probability of being without the burden of Chronic health problems. *Ayurveda* advocates a holistic treatment. Simple ayurvedic herbs are very useful in geriatric women.

Acknowledgment- Nil

Conflicts Of Interest- Nil

Source of finance & support – Nil

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How to cite this article: Sharma K, Purohit D.R, Sharma I.D, Meena A, A. Neelima, “A Critical Review of Herbs for Geriatric Women” IRJAY. [online] 2023;6(7);67-71. Available from: <https://irjay.com>. DOI link- <https://doi.org/10.47223/IRJAY.2023.6710>