Menstrual cycle - hormonal balance and Ayurveda
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ABSTRACT
In the women, Hormones are pivotal part for keeping mind, body and spirit balanced. A healthy woman is a woman whose hormones are in balance state. Throughout the whole month female faces various symptoms, varies with increasing and decreasing hormones. Ayurveda describe Rutuchakra and various Paricharya which should be followed throughout month. Following these Paricharya one can help for normal formation and elimination of Artava. i.e. normal menstrual cycle.

Key words- Menstrual cycle, Hormones, Rutuchakra, Artava.

INTRODUCTION
The importance of having a regular menses can not be undetermined. It is a part, that female experiences and which determines her ability to carry life. Now a days women faces different major menstrual disorders. Shifting diet routine, lifestyle technique are the major causes of any female hormonal imbalance and it should be treated; As most symptoms will aggravated with this lifestyle. Irregular fluctuations, lack or excessive amount of reproductive hormones in female can cause physical and psychological diseases.

Ayurveda looks at regulating hormones with use of diet and lifestyle technique along with specific herbs for more demanding pathologies and symptoms. Ayurveda also describe Shuddha Artav lakshan i.e. qualities of menstrual flow, Rutuchakra and various Paricharya which are expected to follow throughout month. By following these Paricharya one can help to rebalance Apana vayu Which mainly responsible for the normal formation, normal downword flow and elimination of Artava. i.e normal menstrual flow and regulate normal menstrual cycle.

Hormones
In order to fully understand the menstrual cycle, we must look which hormones are most prevalent in female menstrual cycle. There are five main hormones that affect female menstrual cycle and whole reproductive system; Luteinizing hormone releasing hormone (LHRH), Luteinizing hormone (LH), Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH), Oestrogen and Progesterone. These hormones are constantly fluctuating throughout month as well as woman’s reproductive life.

LHRH is released by the Hypothalamus and travels through pituitary gland. LHRH stimulate pituitary gland to release two hormones LH and FSH. These hormones acts upon ovaries.

LH is released by pituitary gland in response to LHRH. The hormone travels through the ovaries and affect the development of follicles. It stimulate the follicles to grow and mature and to be released when ready.

FSH is released by pituitary in response to LHRH and travels to ovaries...
working with LH to stimulate growth and development of follicles\(^3\).

As follicle mature, Oestrogen is released\(^4\). Oestrogen is the hormone responsible for qualities associated with feminity such as maturity of sexual organs, developing of breast tissue, stimulate bone growth, increase body fat and thickness the skin making it more vascular and soft. Oestrogen levels fluctuate throughout the month as long as female menstrual cycle. when Oestrogen levels are higher there is greater sodium in the body and therefore water retention occur which could result in mild edema\(^5\).

The last major female hormone is Progesterone. Secreted initially by the maturing follicle in response to FSH and LH\(^6\). A large amount is later produced by corpus luteum. Progesterone is responsible for thickening of endometrium of the uterus during second half of menstrual cycle: it prevent uterine contraction inhibiting menstruation and also prepare breast for lactation if pregnancy occur\(^7\). This is why, when there is no pregnancy, a woman’s breast may swell and become tender in week or two before menses.

These hormones are the key players in the life of women. They circulate on an average of 28 day cycle in female starting as earlier as 11 until menopause.

During menstrual cycle, a woman can really tune in to whether her hormones are balanced or not depending upon the discomfort she may face throughout the month and when she feels these symptoms. These symptoms are literally depends upon her hormones.

The symptoms varies from phase to phase are given below.

The menstrual cycle divided into three phase

1. Follicular phase
2. Luteal phase
3. Menstrual phase.

| PHASE | Follicular phase | Luteal phase | Menstrual phase |
|-------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| HORMONES | FSH, LH | Progesterone | All hormones are their low point; Which result negative feedback mechanism to produce FSH |
| EVENT OCCOURRE | Growth and maturation of follicle | Rapid growth of endometrium | Menses start |
| MECHANISM | Matured follicle produces oestrogen which is responsible for begining the development of endometrial lining; it’s level increases gradually and surge in 9\(^{th}\) - 12\(^{th}\) day. along with FSH and LH at peak level ovulation take place. | Progesterone increasing fastly along with small increasing amout of estroge; both are peack frm days 23 - 25 then begin to decline as the corpus luteum become inactive. Progesterone and oestrogen are at their low point on 28 day | |
| SYMPTOMS | Feel good, pain reduce, Sexual desire increase | PMS- Breast discomfort fatigue, insomnia, irritibility, anger, fluide retation, weight | Lower abdominal pain, lower back pain, General weakness, etc. |
Artava and Rutuchakra - Shuddha Artava - Ayurveda explains Shuddha Artav Lakshan that “Artava resemble the juice of lakh or the blood of rabbit and which does not stain the cloths after washing”8. This most likely refers to having a consistency of menstrual blood that is not too heavy or clotting.

Normal formation of Artava and elimination of Artava is mainly depend upon Apan Vayu, one of the main type of Vayu dosha. Its primary movement is downward and out of the body. Pain in the lower body, including in the lower back, thighs, and knees, is most often related to aggravated Vayu, as in menstrual pain caused by constriction and restriction in the pelvic area. Imbalanced Apan vayu’s erosive, drying, and destabilizing effects can be mitigated by balancing this Vayu.

Rutuchakra - Ayurveda also classify menstrual cycle (Rutuchakra) into 3 phase9 and symptoms of these phases are given exactly the same way.

| SPECIFIC STAGE | Rutukal | Rutuvyatit kal | Rajkal |
|----------------|---------|----------------|--------|
| Dominant DOSHA | Kapha | Pitta | Vaat |
| Condition of reproductive system | Establishment of Nav raja, | Presence of Purva raja and constriction of yoni | Rajastrav-Menstruation blood loss |
| DURATION | 12-16 days ;differ from Prakruti to Prakruti | From 12 or 16 days to 28th day of cycle | 3-5 days or upto 7 days |
| SYMPTOMS | Prasannata, laghav, Utsah,Sfuran | Stanshool, Gaurav. | Aadhodar shool,Katisool, Pindikodweshtan |

For healthy Rutuchakra and for better child bearing Ayurveda also describe different Parichayas to follow in these days i.e. Rutukala Paricharya, Rutuyit kal Paricharya and Rajasvala Paricharya Rajaswala Paricharya10 - From the onset of menstruation the lady should observe chastity; should avoid sleeping in day time, application of collyrium, shedding of tears, ablution, massaging, paring of nails, fast racing, talking to much, excessive exercise, etc. She should sleep on the bed made by Darbha spread over ground. She should eat Havishya (meal made of ghee, sali rice, milk) or Yawaka (meal made of barley and milk). She should avoid pungent, hot and salty substance. She should not wear ornament, use of any Panchakarma should avoided.

The utility of all these restriction is doubtful, however, this reflect the social customs of that period, in which for earning livelihood hard work was needed, these restriction might help in avoiding this hard labour at least for those days when the lady is definitely physically and psychologically in some change status. However, in todays changed social structure we can only suggest to take some rest in those days11.

Further samhitas explain about Rutukal paricharya12 for healthy progeny: Charak says, the Puran raj is gone and Garbhashay become Shuddha, after taking bath she possesing healthy Yoni, Garbhashay and Shonit which termed as “Rutumati”. According to Sushrut, she looks bright and healthy, her mouth and teeth are moist, she is anxious to hear love stories and have sexual relations, her flanks, eyes and hair are lax, she has twitching over arms, breast, pelvis, umbelicus, thighs and hips
and is happy and excited since the seeds (sperms) deposited during this period are likely to bear fruit (conception), hence it is termed as Rutukal.

Rutukal is varied from person to person it is of 12-16 days. if Yoni, Garbhashay is healthy, it may be entire month. It looks like to be description of proliferative phase which ends after ovulation, however they also describe the whole month of Rutukal, but its specific importance is conception and seems to be description of ovulation, thus it can be said that Rutukal denotes Proliferative phase including ovulation. 

Ayurveda not exactly explain Rutu Paschat kal bt Sushratcharya says as lotus flower closes after sun-set, similarity after Rutukal the Yoni of women gets constricted and does not accept Shukra or permits the entry of Bija into the inner component. we can say after ovulation, during luteal phase due to influence of progesterone hormone cervical mucous become hostile to sperm penetration in secretory phase, probably this very phenomenon has been explained with difference of words. 

A women experiences mood fluctuation before her cycle does not have to cause herself to suffer any longer. Mood shifts are the signs that her body is not sync and there simple lifestyle shifts can make to have more fluid and painless period.

Modern Days

Now a days with different work profile, lifestyle technique and random food habits give rise to high rate of imbalance of hormones that are seen in our society. Which include Oligomenorrhea, Amenorrhea, PCOS which ultimately results in Infertility.

Throughout these months she experiences fluctuations in her hormones which can impact her physically but these transition can mentally shift a women as well. in many disorders there is always a mental component that works in addition with physical symptoms.

Ayurveda manages hormonal imbalance in women from a holistic approach. Looking at the person’s daily regimen, the food/ senses they are absorb and the stressors they are encountering. once those objects are managed, herbs are the next step in relieving symptoms of hormonal imbalance.

Herbs- These are some herbs we can use in daily regimen

Shatavari - It is a key female reproductive herb that treat a wide variety of hormonal symptoms such as PMS, menstrual cramps, mood changes.

Vidari - Rasayan dravya and mainaly use in Amenorrhea

Ashok - It is indicated in excessive bleeding, Anaemia and Dysmenorrhea

Kumari (Aloe Vera) - Many Special uses as Named Kumari; restore the energy and renew the female nature, tonic for female reproductive system. Used to promote menstruation and balance the menstrual cycle

Manjishtha - it induces Menstrual bleeding and stimulate the contraction of Uterus

Yashtimadhu - Mainly used in Amenorrhea related to PCOS, it decreases Testesteron levels.

Goghrut - It promote a healthy reproductive system by maintaining Apan vayu for regular menstrual cycle

CONCLUSION-

Ayurvedic technique can alleviate many symptoms of hormonal imbalances with just a few changes in daily routine. For many women, These symptoms are actually their body clock telling them that things are not balanced and synchronised internally. Women should not ignore these symptoms. In order to live more balanced life; we need to listen our body clock. We can recover through this by maintaining healthy lifestyle, giving proper rest to the body as and when required, switching to healthy and balanced diet with regular exercise and some herbs to better manage hormonal transitions and thus live a balanced life.

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