



E-ISSN: 2278-4136
P-ISSN: 2349-8234
JPP 2018; 7(1): 1952-1954
Received: 17-11-2017
Accepted: 20-12-2017

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A study on awareness about health in middle adulthood women in urban area of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Menopause is a natural phenomenon which affects each and every woman between the age group of 45 to 55 years. The women of developing countries like India are highly affected in comparison to developed countries. It greatly affects their each and every part of life like dietary habits, life style, food consumption pattern, food choices, general health and physical activities etc. Women of this age group produce less progesterone and estrogen which affects their quality of life and is associated with various unpleasant symptoms and make women more prone to chronic and deficiency diseases like heart disease, diabetes mellitus, obesity, hypertension, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, various types of cancers etc. The reason behind some chronic and deficiency diseases to some extent is that the concentration of some minerals like calcium and vitamins like vitamin D is reduced due to low intake and low absorption by the intestine which causes deficiency diseases like osteoporosis and the higher concentration of some macro minerals like carbohydrates like simple monosaccharide's, disaccharides, polysaccharide like starch, and lipids due to higher consumption and alteration of fat in the body after menopause make women more susceptible to various chronic diseases after menopause in comparison to normal younger women. All these factors affect their nutritional, economical and health status. Such problems can be coped up to some extent only by consuming a healthy diet rich in antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, phytoestrogens etc. Not only diet but other factors like consciousness about health like physical exercise, washing of vegetables before cutting, regular health checkups etc. can improve quality of life to some extent of this age group.

Keywords: Food consumption, health checkups, menopause, nutritional status

Introduction

Menopause is a natural part of life of a woman and it is faced by every woman. It is characterized by changes in the secretion of female hormones like estrogen and progesterone which affect their quality of life. After menopause the secretion of both the two hormones cease out and make women more susceptible to various deficiency and chronic diseases which affect their quality and quantity of life. It is estimated that by 2030, 47 million women will be undergoing menopause each year. Average age of menopause is around 48 yrs but it strikes Indian women as young as 30-35 years. Nowadays, with increasing life span, women spend one-third of their lifetime under menopause. Various physiological and psychological changes occur during and after menopause. Such women are unaware about these changes which cause unpleasant symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbances, urinary frequency, poor memory, anxiety, depression, urogenital atrophy, urinary tract infections. This phenomenon has a great influence on the food intake, food choices, general health and physical activities of women thus affecting their nutritional and health status. Due to insufficient knowledge about macro and micro nutrients, their over and under consumption can lead to various chronic and deficiency diseases like obesity, metabolic syndrome, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases like atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, hypertension, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, etc. Except these diseases cognitive decline, dementia, depression and cancer also occur among menopausal women. All these unpleasant symptoms and incidence of chronic and deficiency diseases affect the quality and quantity of life of women. On one hand excess consumption of unsaturated fat, carbohydrate, and low consumption of dietary fibre and low polyunsaturated fatty acids and on another hand low secretion of female hormone estrogen and progesterone make menopausal women more prone to heart disease. Estrogen is believed to have a positive effect on the inner layer of artery wall, helping to keep blood vessels flexible and also helps in absorption of calcium in the body. Before menopause women have a lower risk than men of the same age due to higher circulating levels of high density proteins, occurring when estrogen levels are elevated in the woman's body. Increased osteoporosis is often associated with menopausal estrogen deficiency, since this induces a deregulation of bone remodeling, with accelerated bone reabsorption and decreased bone

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formation. To avoid the detrimental effects of menopause a diet rich in calcium, iron, fiber, omega 3 fatty acids, phytoestrogens, complex carbohydrates, etc. are highly recommended in managing menopause. For good health and to overcome the complications of menopause, the regular biochemical, clinical examination of menopausal women and nutritional assessment of macronutrients and micronutrients in their diet like calcium and iron intake is necessary. During post menopause, counseling regarding nutrition and regular health checkups also plays a very important role in counteracting the risk of chronic and deficiency diseases by taking balanced diet and encouraging healthy eating habits. It ensures better management of menopausal symptoms, improvement of health and nutritional status, thus reducing complications, physical and psychological well-being and encouraging healthy eating habits among menopausal women. Regular health checkups can encourage menopausal women to take supplementary tablets of iron, calcium etc. and also encourage them to consume micronutrient rich foods in their diet on regular basis.

Materials and Methods

The present study was carried out on 100 urban middle adulthood women. The respondents were between the age group of 50-60 years, who were menopausal and were living sedentary life style. The subjects for study were selected randomly from the urban area of Varanasi. For collecting information regarding consciousness of respondents about their health, views of respondents regarding health checkups and views of respondents regarding washing of vegetables before and after cutting, questionnaire cum interview method technique was used during survey. In the study it was found that majority of the respondents were conscious about their health, majority of the respondents were going for health checkups only when they were seriously ill and majority of the respondents were washing vegetables before and after cutting them. During study it was observed that on one hand malabsorption of some nutrients like calcium, vitamin D had occurred in the body of post-menopausal women due to the less secretion of estrogen whereas on the other hand lack of education, ignorance of healthy and balanced diet, unawareness, lack of time and knowledge of importance of nutrients for health and unconsciousness about regular health checkups and lack of knowledge about washing of vegetables before cutting make menopausal women more susceptible to chronic and deficiency diseases. During study it was advised to the respondents to go for regular health checkups and to wash the vegetables before cutting only to prevent the deficiency of vital nutrients like minerals and water soluble vitamins.

Results and discussion

Information regarding consciousness of respondents about their health was presented in Table 1. During the study it was found that the fifty one percent respondents were conscious about their health whereas forty nine percent respondents were not conscious about their health. Information regarding view of respondents regarding regular health checkups was presented in Table 2. During the study it was found that three percent respondents were consulting the doctor yearly, nine percent every six months, five percent every month, seventy nine percent being ill and four percent respondents had never consulted the doctor for their health checkups. Majority of the respondents (79%) had consulted the doctor only when they fell ill. Information on views of respondents regarding cutting

of vegetables before eating was presented in Table 3. During study it was found that thirty one percent respondents were washing the vegetables before cutting, twenty one percent were washing after cutting, thirty eight percent before and after both and seven percent were washing the vegetables accordingly. Vegetables are good sources of vitamins and minerals and these nutrients leach out if they come in the contact of water. Majority of the respondents were suffering from the deficiency of these vital nutrients due to their wrong methods of washing vegetables.

Table 1: Consciousness of respondents about their health

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	51	51
No	49	49
Total	100	100

Table 2: Views of respondents regarding health checkups

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yearly	3	3
Every six month	9	9
Every month	5	5
Being ill	79	79
Never	4	4
Total	100	100

Table 3: Opinion of respondents regarding washing vegetables

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Before cutting	31	31
After cutting	24	24
Both	38	38
Accordingly	7	7
Total	100	100

Conclusion

The conclusion of the study was that the health of the respondents was affected by various factors like lack of consciousness about health, unawareness about regular health checkups and habit of washing vegetables before and after cutting. During study it was observed that the women were consulting the doctor only when they were ill, majority of the respondents were washing vegetables before and after cutting which result in lacking of the vital nutrients in the diet and body which made them more susceptible to various deficiency diseases like osteoporosis, anemia, acidity in the body due to deficiency of electrolytes present in vegetables etc.

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