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HERBAL REMEDIES FOR POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME IN AYURVEDA – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT
Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS/PCOD) is a prevalent endocrine–metabolic disorder in women of reproductive age. It is characterized by menstrual irregularity, anovulation, obesity, and hyperandrogenism. Modern medicine primarily offers symptomatic management, while Ayurveda provides a holistic approach aimed at correcting the root causes. This review highlights Ayurvedic herbal remedies – Triphala, Guggulu, Shilajit, Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Guduchi, Turmeric, Aloe vera, and Lodhra – along with their specific mechanisms of action, dietary and lifestyle modifications, and yoga practices. Ayurvedic management emphasizes balancing the three Doshas, restoring hormonal equilibrium, and improving reproductive health, offering integrative management strategies for PCOD.
KEYWORDS: *PCOD, PCOS, Ayurveda, Herbal Remedies, Triphala, Guggulu, Shatavari, Ashwagandha, Lifestyle Modification, Yoga*

INTRODUCTION

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), also known as Polycystic Ovarian Disease (PCOD), is one of the most common endocrine–metabolic disorders among women of reproductive age. Globally, its prevalence is estimated to range between 6–20%, depending on the diagnostic criteria applied. It is characterized by clinical and/or biochemical hyperandrogenism, chronic anovulation, and polycystic ovarian morphology. Beyond reproductive issues, PCOS is associated with long-term metabolic complications such as insulin resistance, obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, and cardiovascular disease. Psychological concerns, including anxiety and depression, further contribute to the burden of the disorder.

Modern medicine attributes PCOS primarily to hormonal imbalance and insulin resistance. Hyperinsulinemia stimulates ovarian androgen production, while an altered luteinizing hormone (LH) to follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) ratio contributes to anovulation and follicular arrest. The interplay between genetic, lifestyle, and environmental factors worsens the condition, making it a complex disorder with multifactorial origins. Conventional medical management relies on oral contraceptives, anti-androgens, insulin sensitizers like metformin, and fertility drugs. While these approaches alleviate symptoms, they often come with side effects and do not address the underlying causes.

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, describes conditions resembling PCOS under Aartava Dushti (disorders of menstrual flow) and Yonivyapad (diseases of the female reproductive system). According to Ayurvedic principles, the pathology of PCOS is predominantly rooted in Kapha dosha aggravation, which obstructs the artavavaha srotas (channels of menstruation and reproduction). Associated vitiation of Vata leads to irregular cycles and pain, while Pitta imbalance results in acne, excessive hair growth, and inflammation. Improper diet (mithya ahara), sedentary lifestyle (avyayama), excessive consumption of sweet, oily, and heavy foods, and stress are considered causative factors.

Ayurveda emphasizes holistic management through ahara (diet), vihara (lifestyle), and aushadhi (herbal medicines). Herbal remedies are particularly important because they not only correct hormonal imbalances but also restore metabolic equilibrium, improve ovarian function, and promote mental well-being. Herbs such as Triphala, Guggulu, Shilajit, Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Guduchi, Turmeric, Aloe vera, and Lodhra are described in classical texts and validated in modern studies for their role in improving reproductive health.

Thus, Ayurveda offers a multi-dimensional approach to PCOS management—detoxification, regulation of metabolism, stress adaptation, and reproductive tissue rejuvenation. This makes Ayurvedic herbal remedies and lifestyle measures a promising alternative or complementary strategy to conventional treatment, particularly in addressing the root cause rather than just alleviating symptoms.

Methods

This review is based on:

- Classical Ayurvedic texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya.

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- Standard pharmacological references such as Dravyaguna Vijnana and Essentials of Medical Pharmacology.
- Research articles from journals such as AYU, Journal of Ethnopharmacology, and International Journal of Ayurveda Research.

RESULTS

Ayurvedic Herbal Remedies for PCOD

Triphala
Balances tridoshas, detoxifies the body, regulates metabolism, and supports digestion. Its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects help reduce oxidative stress and metabolic disturbances in PCOD.

Guggulu
Possesses lekhan (scraping) and Kapha-reducing properties. It reduces obesity, improves lipid metabolism, and helps control insulin resistance.

Shilajit
Acts as a rasayana (rejuvenator), improving energy metabolism, ovarian function, and insulin sensitivity.

Ashwagandha
An adaptogen that reduces stress, balances cortisol, and supports ovulation by restoring hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis function.

Shatavari
A female reproductive tonic that nourishes artava dhatu (reproductive tissue), promotes follicular development, and regulates menstrual cycles.

Guduchi
Acts as an immunomodulator and anti-inflammatory agent, improves insulin sensitivity, and balances hormones.

Turmeric
Its active compound curcumin reduces inflammation, improves insulin resistance, and lowers androgen levels.

Aloe vera
Regulates menstrual cycles, supports ovarian health, and reduces cystic changes in experimental models.

Lodhra
Traditionally used for gynecological disorders, it controls excessive bleeding, balances Kapha-Pitta, and enhances fertility.

Mechanism of Action of Ayurvedic Herbs on PCOD

Triphala
- Acts as a digestive and metabolic regulator.
- Reduces oxidative stress that worsens ovarian dysfunction.
- Helps in weight management, improving insulin sensitivity.

Guggulu
- Enhances lipid metabolism and reduces cholesterol.
- Pacifies Kapha dosha, preventing obesity-related PCOD.
- Improves insulin sensitivity by lowering systemic inflammation.

Shilajit
- Boosts mitochondrial function, enhancing energy metabolism.
- Regulates blood sugar levels and insulin action.
- Rejuvenates reproductive tissues, improving ovarian function.

Ashwagandha
- Balances cortisol levels, reducing stress-induced anovulation.
- Improves hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis regulation.
- Restores menstrual cycle regularity by harmonizing reproductive hormones.

Shatavari
- Supports estrogen-progesterone balance.
- Nourishes artava dhatu, promoting follicular maturation.
- Enhances fertility by improving ovulation and endometrial health.

Guduchi
- Acts as an insulin sensitizer, reducing resistance.
- Lowers inflammation that contributes to metabolic dysfunction in PCOD.
- Supports immune balance and hormonal stability.

Turmeric
- Curcumin modulates inflammatory pathways (NF-κB, cytokines).
- Improves glucose uptake and reduces insulin resistance.
- Lowers excess androgens, reducing acne and hirsutism.

Aloe vera
- Restores hormonal balance by improving ovarian steroidogenesis.
- Helps regulate menstrual cycles.
- Prevents cystic changes in ovaries through anti-inflammatory effects.

Lodhra
- Enhances uterine tone and endometrial receptivity.
- Balances Kapha and Pitta, preventing abnormal uterine bleeding.
- Improves fertility by supporting implantation and conception.

Lifestyle Modification
- Establishing regular sleep patterns (nidra)
- Reducing stress through meditation and pranayama
- Avoiding sedentary habits, refined sugars, and junk food
- Incorporating daily physical activity and seasonal routines (ritucharya)

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Dietary Recommendations

- Light, warm, easily digestible meals to pacify Kapha
- Avoidance of dairy, deep-fried, and excessively sweet foods
- Inclusion of whole grains, legumes, vegetables, flax seeds, and spices like ginger and cinnamon
- Herbal teas (ginger, tulsi, cinnamon) to improve metabolism

Exercise and Yoga

- Yoga asanas: Surya Namaskar, Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana, Baddha Konasana, and Chakrasana
- Pranayama: Anulom-Vilom, Kapalbhati, Bhramari
- Exercise: Brisk walking, jogging, swimming, or cycling for 30–45 minutes daily

DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic management of PCOD is holistic and emphasizes correction of root causes rather than symptomatic relief. The herbs reviewed exhibit diverse pharmacological actions such as hormonal regulation, insulin sensitization, stress adaptation, and anti-inflammatory effects. Alongside diet, lifestyle, and yoga, they provide integrative management of PCOD. However, large-scale clinical studies and standardization of herbal formulations are needed to validate their efficacy.

CONCLUSION

PCOD is a complex reproductive and metabolic disorder that affects women's health worldwide. Ayurvedic herbs such as Triphala, Guggulu, Shilajit, Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Guduchi, Turmeric, Aloe vera, and Lodhra play a promising role in management. Supported by lifestyle modifications, dietary regulation, and yoga, Ayurveda offers a sustainable and holistic approach to PCOD care.

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