



## Complementary Therapy in Overcoming Complaints During Menopause: A Literature Study

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### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**ABSTRACT**

Hormonal changes during menopause particularly the decline in estrogen levels often trigger a range of physical and psychological symptoms, including hot flashes, sleep disturbances, joint pain, mood swings, anxiety, and depression. This study aims to analyze complementary therapies that have been scientifically proven to alleviate menopausal symptoms. The research method employed is a literature review. Data were collected from peer-reviewed scientific articles published between 2015 and 2024, accessed through electronic databases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, Scopus, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. Selected articles met the criteria of full-text availability and focused on complementary therapies for menopausal women. The findings indicate that therapies such as acupuncture, yoga, reflexology, aromatherapy, music therapy, and the use of herbal remedies (phytoestrogens) have demonstrated effectiveness in improving the quality of life for menopausal women. The conclusion is that complementary therapies offer significant potential in managing the physical and psychological symptoms associated with menopause. Their integration into holistic care approaches can enhance well-being and life quality in menopausal women. Future longitudinal studies are recommended to explore the sustained effects of complementary therapies on hormonal regulation, psychological health, and the risk of chronic diseases in menopausal populations. Additionally, clinical guidelines should be developed to standardize the use of these therapies in menopausal care.

**Keywords:** Complementary, Menopause.

**ABSTRAK**

Perubahan hormonal selama masa menopause terutama penurunan kadar estrogen sering memicu berbagai gejala fisik dan psikologis, termasuk *hot flashes*, gangguan tidur, nyeri sendi, perubahan suasana hati, kecemasan, dan depresi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis terapi komplementer yang telah terbukti secara ilmiah dapat mengurangi keluhan menopause. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah tinjauan pustaka. Data dikumpulkan dari artikel ilmiah yang telah ditinjau sejawat dan diterbitkan antara tahun 2015 hingga 2024, yang diakses melalui basis data elektronik seperti *PubMed*, *ScienceDirect*, *Scopus*, *ProQuest*, dan *Google Scholar*. Artikel yang dipilih memenuhi kriteria berupa ketersediaan teks lengkap dan membahas terapi komplementer pada wanita menopause. Hasil temuan menunjukkan bahwa terapi seperti akupunktur, yoga, refleksi, aromaterapi, terapi musik, dan penggunaan obat herbal (fitoestrogen) terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan kualitas hidup wanita menopause. Kesimpulannya terapi komplementer memiliki potensi signifikan dalam mengelola gejala fisik dan psikologis yang terkait dengan menopause. Integrasi terapi ini ke dalam pendekatan perawatan holistik dapat meningkatkan kesejahteraan dan kualitas hidup wanita menopause. Diperlukan penelitian longitudinal di masa depan untuk mengeksplorasi efek jangka panjang terapi komplementer terhadap regulasi hormonal, kesehatan psikologis, dan risiko penyakit kronis pada populasi wanita menopause. Selain itu, pedoman klinis sebaiknya dikembangkan untuk menstandarkan penggunaan terapi ini dalam perawatan menopause.

**Kata kunci:** Komplementer, Menopause.

## INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a natural phase that every woman will experience as they age, typically occurring between the ages of 45 and 55. During this period, ovarian function declines, leading to the permanent cessation of menstruation (World Health Organization, 2024). The hormonal changes that occur during menopause, particularly the decrease in estrogen, often trigger various physical and psychological complaints, such as hot flashes, sleep disturbances, joint pain, mood changes, anxiety, and depression.

According to the Menopausal Transition Theory developed by Neugarten (1976), menopause is not merely a biological change but also a psychosocial transition. Women face the challenge of adapting to changes in their bodies while also dealing with social pressures related to aging. If not managed properly, this condition has the potential to reduce overall quality of life. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that approximately 75% of menopausal women experience hot flashes, and about 60% suffer from sleep disturbances that affect their physical and mental well-being (World Health Organization, 2024).

Menopausal complaints have traditionally been treated with hormone replacement therapy (HRT). However, long-term use of HRT has been linked to an increased risk of breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, and thromboembolism (Manson et al., 2013). In Indonesia, the use of HRT remains limited due to concerns about its side effects and a cultural preference for natural remedies. This has encouraged many women to seek safer alternatives, one of which is complementary therapy.

Complementary therapy refers to treatment methods used alongside conventional medical treatments. This approach includes the use of herbal medicine, acupuncture, yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, massage, and music therapy, which emphasize holistic balance between the body and mind (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, 2021). The Holistic Nursing Theory developed by Dossey et al. (2005) emphasizes that optimal health can be achieved through physical, emotional, social, and spiritual balance. Therefore, complementary therapy aligns well with the holistic approach to managing menopausal complaints.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of complementary therapy in alleviating menopausal symptoms. A meta-analysis by Kim et al. (2011) found that acupuncture effectively reduces the frequency and intensity of hot flashes and improves sleep quality in menopausal women. Similarly, research by Cramer et al. (2018) revealed that yoga not only benefits physical health but is also effective in reducing anxiety and depression, as well as improving the quality of life for menopausal women.

From the perspective of herbal medicine use, a meta-analysis by Chen et al. (2015) found that phytoestrogens, plant-derived estrogen compounds found in soy and other plants, significantly reduce vasomotor symptoms such as hot flashes. Meanwhile, a systematic review by Lee et al. (2021) concluded that although many types of complementary therapies show promising results, the quality of evidence varies, and further research with robust methodologies is needed to ensure their effectiveness and safety.

However, despite the availability of scientific evidence regarding the role of complementary therapies in managing menopausal symptoms, most of the data remain scattered across various sources and have not been comprehensively summarized. Moreover, specific data on the use of complementary therapies within Indonesia's cultural and traditional context is still limited. A study by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, (2022) found that approximately 40% of menopausal women in Indonesia use herbal or traditional methods to manage their symptoms. However, no systematic review has categorized the effectiveness of each method.

This study contributes to providing a systematic review of complementary therapies used to manage menopausal symptoms, focusing on the Indonesian context. By integrating scientific evidence from global studies while highlighting cultural aspects and treatment preferences in Indonesia, this research aims to analyze the effectiveness of various complementary therapies in reducing menopausal symptoms, explore differences in the effectiveness of therapies used in Indonesia compared to other countries, and identify factors influencing the preference of Indonesian menopausal women in choosing complementary therapies. Through this review, the findings are expected to serve as a scientific reference for healthcare professionals in developing a more holistic approach to menopausal care that aligns with the cultural and social needs of

Indonesian women. This study aims to analyze complementary therapies that have been scientifically proven to alleviate menopausal symptoms.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a literature study method that aims to review and analyze research results related to the effectiveness of complementary therapy in overcoming menopause complaints. Data were obtained from scientific articles accessed through electronic databases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, Scopus, ProQuest, and Google Scholar.

Literature search using keywords such as “complementary therapy for menopause”, “alternative therapy for menopausal symptoms”, “yoga for menopause”, and “herbal therapy for menopause”. Inclusion criteria included articles in Indonesian or English, published in the period 2015-2024, having full text, and discussing complementary therapy in menopausal women. Articles in the form of editorials, opinions, and letters to the editor were excluded from this review.

The obtained literature was selected based on the relevance of the title and abstract, then evaluated for quality using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tool. Important data from each article were extracted, including author name, year of publication, research design, sample, type of complementary therapy, and main results. Furthermore, the data were analyzed descriptively-qualitatively to identify patterns of findings and compare the effectiveness of various complementary therapies in overcoming menopausal complaints. The final results are presented in the form of a scientific narrative that presents a synthesis of findings, critical discussion, and implications for the development of holistic health services for menopausal women.

The analysis was conducted using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach to ensure transparency and systematic selection and synthesis of studies. The PRISMA stages include identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of articles. Articles that meet the inclusion criteria were assessed using clear quality assessment criteria, including internal validity, study design, and sample size. To enhance reliability, multiple independent reviewers evaluated the included studies to reduce selection bias.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Review of Complementary Therapy Articles during Menopause.

No	Author's, years	Title	Design	Result
1	Chiu et al., 2015	Effects of acupuncture on menopause-related symptoms and quality of life in women in natural menopause: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials	Meta analysis	Of 104 relevant studies, 12 studies with 869 participants met the inclusion criteria and were included in this study. We found that acupuncture significantly reduced the frequency ( $g = -0.35$ ; 95% CI, -0.5 to -0.21) and severity ( $g = -0.44$ ; 95% CI, -0.65 to -0.23) of hot flashes. Acupuncture significantly decreased the psychological, somatic, and urogenital subscale scores on the Menopause Rating Scale ( $g = -1.56$ , $g = -1.39$ , and $g = -0.82$ , respectively; $P < 0.05$ ). Acupuncture improved the vasomotor subscale score on the Menopause-Specific Quality of Life questionnaire ( $g = -0.46$ ; 95% CI, -0.9 to -0.02). Long-term effects (up to 3 mo) on hot flash frequency and severity ( $g = -0.53$ and $g = -0.55$ , respectively) were found.

No	Author's, years	Title	Design	Result
2	Cramer et al., 2020	Yoga for Menopausal Symptoms—A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis	Systematically review and meta-analyze	Thirteen RCTs with 1306 participants were included. Compared with no treatment, yoga reduced total menopausal symptoms (SMD=-1.05; 95% CI -1.57 to -0.53), psychological (SMD=-0.75; 95% CI -1.17 to -0.34), somatic (SMD=-0.65; 95% CI -1.05 to -0.25), vasomotor (SMD=-0.76; 95% CI -1.27 to -0.25), and urogenital symptoms (SMD=-0.53; 95% CI -0.81 to -0.25). Compared with exercise controls, only an effect on vasomotor symptoms was found (SMD=-0.45; 95% CI -0.87 to -0.04). Effects were robust against selection bias, but not against detection and attrition bias. No serious adverse events were reported.
3	Rowe & Baber, 2021	The effects of phytoestrogens on postmenopausal health	Narrative Review	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Small reduction in vasomotor symptoms, though the effect is likely modest and slow in onset.</li> <li>2. Improvement in bone mineral density and cardiovascular risk markers has been observed.</li> <li>3. No harmful effects found on breast, endometrial, or colorectal cancer — may even be protective.</li> <li>4. No consistent benefit for cognitive function (evidence is mixed).</li> <li>5. Clinical efficacy is heterogeneous and inconclusive due to individual metabolic variations and age-related factors.</li> </ol>
4	Johnson et al., 2019	Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Menopause	Critical literature review	Results indicate that mind and body practices may be of benefit in reducing stress and bothersomeness of some menopausal symptoms. In particular, hypnosis is a mind-body intervention that has consistently shown to have a clinically significant effect on reducing hot flashes.
5	Lee et al, 2021	Aromatherapy for Managing Menopausal Symptoms: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trials	A systematic review and meta-analysis	Seven RCTs were analyzed, mostly with low risk of bias except in blinding. Aromatherapy (inhalation of lavender or neroli, and aromatherapy massage) was more effective than placebo in reducing menopausal symptoms and improving sexual desire.

No	Author's, years	Title	Design	Result
6	Kaban al., 2021	The Effectiveness of Relaxation Reflexology Massage in Overcoming Insomnia (Shi Mian) in Postmenopausal Women	Comparative quasi-experimental	The results of the Paired t-test hypothesis in both age groups showed a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ , it indicates that relaxation reflexology is effective in treating insomnia in postmenopausal women and has a statistically significant and similar effect across both age groups.
7	Hanafi & Utamayasa, 2021	Effect of Yoga Exercise on Anxiety Levels Among Premenopausal Women at Dolphin Studio, Lovina, Singaraja	Preeksperimen one group pre-post test design	These results indicate that there is a significant effect on the provision of hatha yoga to reduce the level of research in premenopausal women
8	Harira et al, 2023	Effectiveness of Low-Impact Aerobic Exercise in Reducing Anxiety Among Menopausal Women at Soropia Health Center, Kendari City	Preeksperimen one group pre-post test design	The results of the study show that in the pretest, 19 respondents (95%) experienced severe anxiety, with an average anxiety level at the severe anxiety level (31.5). In the posttest, 12 respondents (60%) did not experience anxiety, with an average anxiety level at the no anxiety level (12.2). The bivariate analysis results showed that low-impact aerobic exercise was effective in reducing anxiety in menopausal women (p-value < 0.000 < 0.05).
9	Tarigan & Sembiring, 2020	The Effectiveness of Yoga on Reducing Menopause Syndrome Complaints to Improve the Quality of Life of Menopausal Women in the Work Area of Medan Johor Health Center in 2020	Quasi-experiment design and pretest and posttest one group	The results showed the mean pre test was 24.15 with SD 5.193, the mean post test was 10.20 with SD 4.093, it mean there was a differences of average before and after getting yoga. The results of the paired sample t-test obtained P-Value of 0.000,
10	Guna at el, 2024	The Relationship between Physical Activity Levels and Quality of Life in Menopausal Women	Observational analytics with a cross-sectional approach	Based on the non-parametric analysis test of Spearman rho, a value of $p = 0.000$ ( $p < 0.05$ ) and a correlation coefficient $r = 0.649$ . Conclusion: Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the level of physical activity and menopausal women.

## DISCUSSION

Various non-pharmacological interventions have been widely explored as alternatives or complements to conventional treatments for menopausal symptoms. From the review of ten selected studies, it is evident that approaches such as acupuncture, yoga, aromatherapy, reflexology, phytotherapy, and physical activity offer beneficial outcomes in mitigating both physical and psychological symptoms related to menopause. These findings align with broader research trends in complementary medicine, supporting the clinical relevance of holistic and non-invasive interventions.

Among these interventions, acupuncture stands out for its robust evidence base. Chiu et al. (2015) demonstrated significant reductions in hot flash frequency and severity as well as improvements in quality of life. The acupuncture may outperform placebo in reducing vasomotor symptoms. Moreover, research by Ee et al. (2016) added that acupuncture may also positively impact mood and sleep quality in menopausal women, further extending its clinical utility.

Yoga was another prominent intervention in the reviewed articles. Cramer et al. (2020) presented convincing evidence from thirteen RCTs that yoga significantly reduced menopausal symptoms across multiple domains. This aligns with findings from Chattha et al. (2008), who noted that yoga improves endocrine balance and reduces anxiety among perimenopausal women. Additionally, a study by Danhauer et al. (2009) highlighted yoga's effect in decreasing depression and stress biomarkers, which are commonly elevated during the menopausal transition.

Aromatherapy also emerged as a viable option, particularly for managing mood disturbances and sexual health. Lee et al. (2021) found aromatherapy using lavender and neroli essential oils to be superior to placebo in improving menopausal symptoms. Their findings resonate with the work of Hur et al. (2008), which found that aromatherapy massage reduced cortisol levels and improved mood among middle-aged women. Moreover, systematic reviews like that by Lakhan et al. (2016) support the role of essential oils in anxiety management, further justifying their use during the menopause period.

Relaxation techniques such as reflexology and low-impact aerobic exercise also showed promise. The findings by Kaban et al. (2021) and Harira et al. (2023) suggest significant improvements in insomnia and anxiety, respectively. Similarly, systematic reviews by Daley et al. (2014) and Aiello et al. (2004) reported that exercise can lead to moderate improvements in menopausal symptoms, particularly mood and sleep-related concerns.

Phytotherapy, particularly involving phytoestrogens, remains a contentious yet intriguing area. Rowe and Baber (2021) highlighted the modest but positive effects of phytoestrogens on vasomotor symptoms and cardiovascular markers, with no significant harm to reproductive tissues. However, studies like those by Lethaby et al. (2013) and Chen et al. (2015) found inconsistent outcomes across different populations, suggesting that individual variability in metabolism and hormonal status likely moderates the efficacy of such treatments.

Physical activity in general also appears to be a key determinant of menopausal health outcomes. Guna et al. (2024) demonstrated a strong correlation between activity level and overall quality of life, reinforcing findings from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI), which reported that regular moderate activity reduces the risk of depression and sleep disorders during menopause (Sternfeld et al., 2004). In addition, Elavsky and McAuley (2007) found that physical activity was associated with improved self-perception and psychological well-being in perimenopausal women.

Despite the encouraging findings, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. Studies varied widely in design, sample size, and intervention duration, which complicates generalizability. For instance, many local studies used pre-experimental designs without control groups, thereby increasing the risk of internal bias. Moreover, Cramer et al. (2018) noted that although yoga studies were robust against selection bias, many were susceptible to detection and attrition bias due to limited blinding and follow-up procedures.

Another significant issue is heterogeneity among studies included in meta-analyses. As noted by Borenstein et al. (2021), high statistical heterogeneity can undermine the interpretability of pooled results. Lee et al. (2021) and Chiu et al. (2015) both reported such heterogeneity in their analyses, partly due to diverse outcome measures, intervention styles, and participant demographics. This is compounded by the possibility of publication bias, as suggested by

Rosenthal's (1979) file-drawer problem, where non-significant results are less likely to be published, inflating perceived efficacy.

In conclusion, non-pharmacological interventions like acupuncture, yoga, aromatherapy, reflexology, and physical activity present considerable potential for managing menopausal symptoms. These approaches offer accessible, low-risk options for women seeking alternatives to hormone replacement therapy. Nevertheless, future research must focus on high-quality randomized controlled trials with larger sample sizes, standardized outcome measures, and longer follow-up durations to strengthen the evidence base. Additionally, exploring combination therapies and conducting cost-effectiveness analyses will help inform clinical guidelines and support broader implementation in community and primary care settings.

## CONCLUSION

Complementary therapy has proven to have potential in managing menopausal symptoms, but its effectiveness varies depending on research methods and individual characteristics. Some therapies, such as acupuncture and phytoestrogens, have stronger evidence, while others require further research. Health policies should support the integration of complementary therapies into primary healthcare services through training for medical professionals, as well as enhancing education and regulation to ensure their safety and effectiveness. Healthcare providers are encouraged to apply evidence-based therapies tailored to patient conditions and collaborate with complementary therapy practitioners. Additionally, further research is needed to strengthen scientific evidence and ensure safe implementation within the cultural context of Indonesia. With policy support and evidence-based practice, complementary therapy can serve as an effective alternative for improving the quality of life of menopausal women while fostering a more holistic and inclusive healthcare system.

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