Secondary Amenorrhea
Temporarily Absent Periods

Secondary amenorrhea is the stopping of menstrual flow for 3 to 6 months in a female who has previously had periods. There are many possible causes. Most of these causes are not serious. Usually treating the underlying problem causing the loss of menses will return your periods to normal.

CAUSES

Some common and uncommon causes of not menstruating include:

- Malnutrition
- Hypoglycemia
- Polycystic ovarian disease
- Stress or fear.
- Breastfeeding
- Hormone imbalance
- Ovarian failure.
- Medications
- Extreme obesity
- Cystic fibrosis
- Drastic weight reduction from any cause or low body weight.
- Early menopause
- Removal of ovaries or uterus.
- Contraceptives
- Illness
- Long term (*chronic*) illnesses
- Cushing's disease
- Thyroid problems
- Birth control pills, patches, or vaginal rings for birth control.

DIAGNOSIS

This diagnosis is made by your caregiver taking a medical history and doing a physical exam. Pregnancy must be ruled out. Often times, numerous blood tests of different hormones in the body may be measured. Urine testing may be done. Specialized x-rays may have to be done as well as measuring the Body Mass Index (BMI). If it is less than 20, the hypothalamus may be the problem. If it is greater than 30, the cause may be diabetes mellitus.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on the cause of the amenorrhea. If an eating disorder is present, this can be treated with an adequate diet and therapy. Chronic illnesses may improve with treatment of the illness. Overall, the outlook is good, and the amenorrhea may be corrected with medications, lifestyle changes, or surgery. If the amenorrhea can not be corrected, it is sometimes possible to create a false menstruation with medications which help women feel more normal. Should emotional problems occur, your caregiver will be able to help you.

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