Primary Amenorrhea
No Periods, Absent Periods, Absent Menses

Primary amenorrhea is the absence of any menstrual flow in a woman by the age of sixteen. An average age for the start of menstruation is age twelve. Primary amenorrhea is not considered to have occurred until a girl is over age 16 and has never menstruated. This may occur with or without other signs of puberty.

CAUSES

Some common causes of not menstruating include:

- Malnutrition.
- Low blood sugar (*hypoglycemia*).
- Polycystic ovarian disease (*cysts in the ovaries, not ovulating*).
- Absence of the vagina, uterus, or ovaries since birth (*congenital*).
- Extreme obesity.
- Cystic fibrosis.
- Drastic weight loss from any cause.
- Over-exercising (running, biking) causing loss of body fat.
- Pituitary gland tumor in the brain.
- Long-term (*chronic*) illnesses.
- Cushing's disease.
- Thyroid disease (*hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism*).
- Part of the brain (*hypothalamus*) not functioning.
- Premature ovarian failure.

DIAGNOSIS

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

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 amenorrhea may be corrected with medicines, lifestyle changes, or surgery. If the amenorrhea can not be corrected, it is sometimes possible to create a false menstruation with medicines, to help young women feel more normal. Should emotional problems occur, your caregiver will be able to help you.

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