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CONDITIONS & TREATMENTS: AMENORRHEA

Amenorrhea is defined as the absence of menstruation. While completely normal before puberty, during pregnancy, and after menopause, amenorrhea at other times can indicate a problem.

There are two types of amenorrhea, primary and secondary. Primary amenorrhea is when a woman reaches the age of 16 and has never had a menstrual period. When a woman who has previously had normal menstrual periods ceases to menstruate for three months or more, she is experiencing secondary amenorrhea.

Primary amenorrhea may be due to chromosomal disorders, birth defects affecting the reproductive organs, hormonal disorders, tumors, chronic illnesses, excessive exercise, stress, and food restrictions.

Secondary amenorrhea can be caused by problems with the pituitary, thyroid, and adrenal glands, ovary, tumors, stress, excessive exercise, weight loss, or illness. The most common cause of secondary amenorrhea is functional - due to a combination of malnutrition, excess energy expenditure and psychological stress.

Treatments for amenorrhea, whether primary or secondary, vary depending on the cause and may include testing the pituitary gland, surgical removal of cysts, or hormonal treatment.