



Amenorrhea (No Periods)

What is amenorrhea?

Amenorrhea means not having menstrual periods. Periods typically start between the ages of 12 and 13 years (about 2 years after the breasts begin to grow); however, everyone is different. Amenorrhea is when you have not started your period by the age of 15 years, or if you've had a period, but it stops for more than 3-6 months.

What causes amenorrhea?

To have a period, puberty needs to start (begin maturing physically) and hormones from the brain begin to send signals to the reproductive organs (ovaries and uterus). These hormones cause the uterus to build a lining and the ovary to release an egg (ovulation). During a period, the uterus sheds this lining which leaves the body through the vagina gradually over a week or so. Stress, weight changes and other health problems can affect hormones and lead to amenorrhea including:

- Pregnancy
- Vigorous exercise
- Eating disorders
- Obesity
- Polycystic Ovary Syndrome
- Other endocrine (hormone) problems, including thyroid disease
- Chronic illnesses
- Certain medications
- Congenital anomalies of the uterus or vagina
- Certain genetic conditions
- Some treatments for cancer

How will my health provider diagnose amenorrhea?

Your healthcare provider will start by asking you general questions about your past medical history including any physical problems, major stressors, medication use, puberty timeline, menstrual history, exercise and nutrition habits. On exam, your healthcare provider will pay careful attention to your thyroid gland, breasts, and skin looking for acne and body hair. Looking at the external genitalia may be helpful as well. Your healthcare provider may also recommend tests to check for pregnancy and hormone levels and imaging studies such as a pelvic ultrasound to look at your uterus and ovaries.

How is amenorrhea treated?

Treatment depends on the cause and may involve one or more of the following: keeping a menstrual calendar, healthy lifestyle changes, medications such as hormones, working with a counselor and/or referral to a surgical specialist. Your healthcare provider will work with you to find the best treatment for you.

Are there any long term consequences of amenorrhea?

This is dependent on what the underlying problem is, but in most cases amenorrhea can be successfully treated.

Having a regular period is a marker of good health. If you have any concerns about your period, please talk to your healthcare provider!