



Amenorrhea & Anovulation

What is it?

Amenorrhea is the absence of menstrual period. It is a common disorder among young women, and is usually temporary.

Anovulation is the absence of ovulation – the failure of an egg to be released from ovary each month or cycle. It may result in the absence of menstrual periods, or in abnormal bleeding patterns.

The pituitary gland is a small gland located in the center of the brain that regulates ovulation. This gland produces hormones that stimulate both the development of the egg and the production of hormones in the ovary.

Estrogen is the ovarian hormone produced during the first half of the menstrual cycle (roughly 15 days).

Progesterone is the hormone produced by the egg capsule (corpus luteum) during the half of the menstrual cycle.

Menstruation is the bleeding which occurs when the hormone levels fall off at the end of the menstrual cycle.

What causes these disorders?

The pituitary gland system is very sensitive and responds to many different types of input. The system is turned off by the control pills. In many women this system is very sensitive to stresses such as illnesses, moving, family or relationship changes or variations in body weight. These stresses may also cause the pituitary system to be turned off and result in anovulation and amenorrhea. Other less common causes of anovulation include medications, thyroid and other hormonal disorders, permanent failure of the ovaries, tumors of the ovaries or other glands, and tumors of the pituitary gland itself.

What are the symptoms?

Anovulation is a condition where there is a relative imbalance of hormones as compared to the normal menstrual cycle. The ovary may produce estrogen in this condition, but will not produce progesterone since this hormone is made only by the corpus luteum after ovulation. Some women will have no vaginal bleeding at all, while others may bleed at irregular intervals or even heavily for extended periods. Other symptoms of anovulation may include prolonged feelings of “bloating” or breast tenderness similar to the normal symptoms before a regular period begins.