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ANOREXIA IN YOUNG WOMEN AND AMENORRHEA

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Anorexia nervosa is a severe eating disorder characterized by restricted food intake, an intense fear of gaining weight, and a distorted body image. It predominantly affects young women, with onset often occurring during adolescence or early adulthood. A common and serious complication of anorexia is amenorrhea-the absence of menstrual periods for three or more consecutive months.

This paper explores the relationship between anorexia and amenorrhea in young women, examining the physiological mechanisms, health consequences, and potential treatments.

The primary cause of amenorrhea in anorexic individuals is hypothalamic dysfunction. Chronic malnutrition and low body fat lead to decreased secretion of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH), disrupting the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian (HPO) axis. This results in reduced levels of luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH), leading to anovulation and estrogen deficiency. The body enters a state of energy conservation, prioritizing vital functions over reproductive health. Amenorrhea in anorexia has significant health implications. Prolonged estrogen deficiency can lead to osteoporosis, increasing fracture risk even in young women. Additionally, cardiovascular complications, cognitive impairments, and psychological distress are common. The absence of menstruation also serves as a clinical indicator of disease severity, often correlating with low body mass index (BMI) and poor prognosis. Treatment requires a multidisciplinary approach, including nutritional rehabilitation, psychotherapy, and medical monitoring. Weight restoration is essential for resuming normal menstrual function, though recovery may be delayed due to persistent hormonal imbalances. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and family-based treatment (FBT) are effective in addressing underlying psychological factors. In some cases, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may be considered to mitigate bone loss, though it does not substitute for weight recovery.

Anorexia nervosa and amenorrhea are closely linked conditions with complex interactions and significant consequences on an individual's health. Understanding the underlying physiological mechanisms and addressing both the physical and psychological aspects of the disorders is crucial for effective management. A multidisciplinary approach, including medical, nutritional, and psychological interventions, is essential for the successful treatment of anorexia nervosa and amenorrhea.