

# AMENORRHEA

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**The absence of periods (amenorrhoea) is called *Bi Jing* in Chinese:**

***jing* = menstruation**

**and *bi* = "shut" or "closed"**

**Western medicine distinguishes between primary amenorrhoea which occurs when a woman has not had a period by the time she is 18, and secondary amenorrhoea, which occurs when a woman has had periods but they have stopped for at least three months.**



**Obviously, the temporary interruption of the menses that occurs after childbirth and during breast-feeding is not considered amenorrhoea, nor, similarly, is the stopping of the menses for one or two months as a consequence of sudden environmental or living condition changes.**



**If a woman presents with secondary amenorrhoea it is of course very important to exclude pregnancy first of all because, were the patient treated for amenorrhoea, one might prescribe herbs which are contraindicated in pregnancy. I shall call this condition “No Periods” rather than “amenorrhoea”.**



**A basic differentiation must be made between:**

**No Periods from a Deficiency**

**and No Periods from an Excess**

**includes:**

**Blood deficiency, Spleen and Kidney deficiency, and Liver and Kidney deficiency.**

**usually due to stagnation of: Qi and/or Blood, Phlegm or Cold.**

**It should be further differentiated between that from a Pre-natal and that from a Post-natal weakness. Obviously primary amenorrhoea is more likely to be due to a deficiency of the Pre-natal Essence and secondary amenorrhoea to a deficiency of the Post-natal Qi.**



In the "Yellow Emperor's Classic" No Periods was called "woman having no moon" (i.e. no monthly flow) or "moon affair not coming", indicating the early connection of menstruation with the moon phases.



# AETIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY

## 1) EMOTIONAL STRESS

**Anger, intended in a broad sense to include frustration, resentment, hatred and irritation, may cause stagnation of Qi which, with time, may lead to stasis of Blood: this causes an Excess type of No Periods.**



**Sadness and grief are very common factors in the development of amenorrhoea. They deplete Qi of the Lungs and Heart: the Lungs govern Qi, the Heart governs Blood, and when Qi cannot make or move Blood and Heart-Blood cannot descend to the Uterus, the menses stop.**

**The “Secret Prescriptions for Gynaecological Patterns and Treatment” by Ye Tian Shi says:**

*“The Heart governs Blood and the Spleen is the Root of Qi and Blood. Worry and pensiveness injure the Heart making Heart-Qi depleted; this cannot generate Blood, the Spleen is the child of the Heart and [therefore] loses its nourishment, the appetite declines which cuts off the Root of generation and transformation [i.e. the Spleen].”*



**Ye Tian Shi 1817 Secret Prescriptions for Gynaecological Patterns and Treatment by Ye Tian Shi (Ye Tian Shi Nu Ke Zheng Zhi Mi Fang), cited in Cong Chun Yu 1989 Chinese Medicine Gynaecology (Zhong Yi Fu Ke Xue), Ancient Chinese Medicine Texts Publishing House, Beijing, p. 74.**

**Worry and pensiveness affect Lungs and Spleen and may lead to deficiency and stagnation of Qi simultaneously. Deficient Qi fails to make Blood while stagnant Qi fails to move Blood leading to stasis of Blood. Amenorrhoea can therefore result from a simultaneous deficiency and stasis of Blood. Chen Jia Yuan says in his "Secret Gynaecological Prescriptions" (Qing dynasty):**

*“Worry injures the Lungs, pensiveness depletes the Spleen, since Lungs and Spleen are injured Qi and Blood stagnate, the woman becomes irritable and resentful and develops palpitations and a feeling of distension and oppression, and eventually amenorrhoea..”*

**2. Chen Jia Yuan 1988 Eight Secret Books on Gynaecology (Fu Ke Mi Shu Ba Zhong), Ancient Chinese Medical Books Publishing House, Beijing, p. 153. Chen's book, written during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), was entitled Secret Gynaecological Prescriptions (Fu Ke Mi Fang) and published in 1729.**

## **2) EXCESSIVE PHYSICAL WORK OR EXERCISE**

**This weakens the Spleen which fails to make Blood and, when occurring at puberty time, it may also cause stagnation of Qi and Blood in the Lower Burner, thus causing primary amenorrhoea. In this case the amenorrhoea is due to a Deficiency (of Blood) complicated by an Excess condition (stagnation of Qi and Blood in the Lower Burner).**



## **3) HEREDITARY WEAKNESS**

**A hereditary Kidney weakness can of course cause primary amenorrhoea. In this case there is a deficiency of Kidney-Essence and usually also of Liver-Blood.**



#### 4) DIET

A diet poor in nourishment leads to depletion of Qi and Blood and therefore secondary amenorrhoea from Blood deficiency and Spleen deficiency. This becomes a cause of disease especially if it occurs at a young age when girls are likely to adopt a slimming diet or a vegetarian diet that fails to substitute for the meat protein a judicious combination of vegetable types of protein.

Excessive consumption of dairy foods and greasy foods leads to the formation of Dampness and Phlegm: these can obstruct the Lower Burner and lead to amenorrhoea. These women are often overweight. The book “Chinese Medicine Gynaecology” says:



*“Amenorrhoea in overweight women is due to Dampness and Phlegm obstructing the Membranes.”*

Cong Chun Yu 1989 Chinese Medicine Gynaecology (Zhong Yi Fu Ke Xue), Ancient Chinese Medicine Texts Publishing House, Beijing, p. 74.

## **5) OVERWORK**

**Overwork in the sense of working long hours without adequate rest for many years, leads to deficiency of Liver- and Kidney-Yin which, in turn, may cause secondary amenorrhoea.**



# PATHOLOGY

**From a pathology point of view, the main distinction to be made is that between Deficiency and Excess types of amenorrhoea.**

## **LIVER AND KIDNEY DEFICIENCY**

**Liver and Kidney involves a deficiency of Kidney-Essence and Liver-Blood, which in turn leads to emptiness of the Penetrating and Directing vessels. It can be caused by hereditary weakness of the Kidney-Essence, too many childbirths too close together, or overwork.**

