

Female Hypogonadism Symptoms

Hypogonadism is a condition that can affect both males and females. It is marked by the failure of the sex glands, called gonads, to perform as they should. While this condition is not fatal and doesn't usually require hospitalization, its effects can be unpleasant and uncomfortable. When a girl or woman develops hypogonadism, it is referred to as female hypogonadism.

Hypogonadism is a condition that occurs when the gonads fail to produce enough hormones or do not produce them at all. The sex glands affected in male hypogonadism are the testes, and the ovaries are affected in females. According to eMedicine.com, hypogonadism occurs more frequently in men than in women.

Causes

There are two categories of female hypogonadism. One is called primary hypogonadism and occurs when the ovaries do not work as they should. Conditions that affect the immune system, liver and kidney disease, infections, radiation, some types of genetic disorders, developmental disorders and some surgeries may cause the primary form. Central hypogonadism occurs when the parts of the brain responsible for controlling the sex glands fail to function as they should. Some causes of this form of the condition include abnormal bleeding, tumors, genetic disorders, infections and radiation. Nutritional deficiencies and an overabundance of iron in the body may contribute to it as well.

Symptoms

Sometimes female hypogonadism develops before a girl reaches puberty. When this occurs, a girl may not begin menstruation when expected, she may be shorter than normal and her breasts may not develop. When the condition occurs after a female has reached puberty, she may stop menstruating, have hot flashes and experience a loss of hair on her body. She may also note a lowered sex drive. In some cases, female hypogonadism appears in a woman who has a brain tumor. When this occurs, she may experience the typical symptoms of the condition as well as head pain, loss of vision and discharge from the breasts.

Complications

Besides the ordinary symptoms of female hypogonadism, some women may be unable to conceive or carry babies to term because of the condition. Interestingly, hypogonadism can occur naturally instead of as a result of surgery or an underlying health problem. When it occurs naturally, it is called menopause and is often accompanied by hot flashes, irritability and vaginal dryness.

Treatment

According to Georgetown University Hospital, female hypogonadism is treatable. To treat it, women may take estrogen, a type of hormone that naturally occurs in the body, in pill or patch form. Sometimes, women are treated with both estrogen and progesterone--another type of naturally-occurring hormone--to help lower their risk of developing cancer of the lining of the uterus. Some doctors prescribe low levels of testosterone, a male sex hormone, to help women with low sex drives. Additionally, doctors may give women pills or injections to help stimulate ovulation, which is the releasing of an egg from the ovaries.

Dr Shahjada Selim

Assistant Professor

Department of Endocrinology

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Cell: +880 1919000022

Chamber

Comfort Doctors' Chamber 165-166 Green Road, Dhaka Mobile:

01731956033, 01552468377, **01919000022**

Email: selimshahjada@gmail.com

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