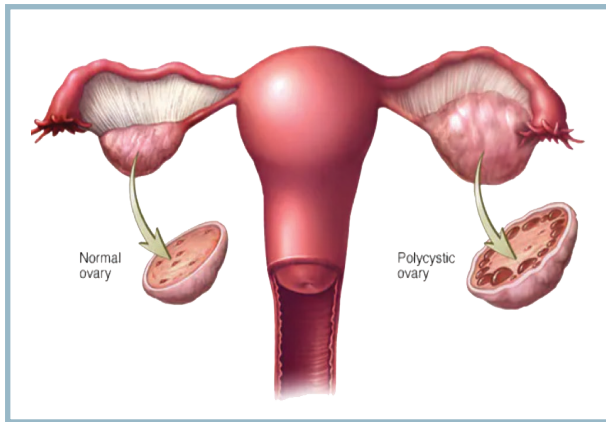


What is PCOS?

Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) is one of the most common hormone imbalance conditions, affecting between 5 to 10 percent of women. According to the PCOS Foundation, less than half of all women with PCOS are actually diagnosed correctly, meaning that millions of women are potentially unaware of their condition.

If a woman has PCOS, her ovaries may appear enlarged and her unbalanced hormones cause small cysts to grow on her ovaries. If left uncontrolled, PCOS can increase a woman's risk of diabetes, heart disease, and can also make it more difficult for her to get pregnant.



- Polycystic ovaries - ovaries that are enlarged and have small cysts on their outer edges
- Weight gain, trouble losing weight, increased risk of being overweight or obese
- Fertility problems, gestational diabetes, or pregnancy-induced high blood pressure
- Metabolic syndrome — elevated blood pressure, increased blood sugar, abnormal cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- Type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetes — PCOS and diabetes sometimes go hand-in-hand due to elevated levels of insulin and insulin resistance
- Sleep apnea, depression, and anxiety
- Abnormal uterine bleeding or endometrial hyperplasia (a condition when your uterine lining becomes too thick and irregular)

What are the symptoms of PCOS?

THE SYMPTOMS OF PCOS CAN BE HIGHLY VARIABLE, RUNNING THE SPECTRUM FROM MILD TO SEVERE. THEY MAY INCLUDE:

- Elevated levels of testosterone may result in physical signs, such as excess facial and body hair (hirsutism), as well as cystic acne, oily skin, and male-pattern hair loss
- Irregular periods, heavy and prolonged periods, or absence of periods for months at a time — you may have fewer than nine in a year or they may cease altogether

How is PCOS diagnosed?

To make the correct diagnosis of PCOS, other causes of ovulation disorders and high level of male sex hormones must be excluded. Many patients can be diagnosed based on detailed medical history (irregular painful menstruation, lack of menses, etc.) and physical examination that reveals clinical signs like acne, hair loss, extra body hair, etc.

Which tests can help diagnose PCOS?

Unfortunately, there is no test that can definitively diagnose PCOS. The following tests might help your Ob/Gyn with the diagnosis:

- Pelvic ultrasound to look for cysts on your ovaries and to check if your uterine lining is thickened
- Lab tests to check your hormone levels, such as a serum total testosterone test, blood sugar, insulin, and other tests to rule out thyroid or other glandular issues
- A glucose tolerance test
- A blood test to check cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- A determination of your body mass index (BMI)

What causes PCOS?

THE DEBATE ON THE EXACT CAUSES OF PCOS STILL CONTINUES, BUT FACTORS MAY INCLUDE:

- Genetics (women whose mothers and sisters have PCOS are more likely to be affected by this condition)
- Family history of type-2 diabetes.
- Premature adrenarche (a condition when puberty changes begin early, before age 8 for girls)
- Elevated levels of male hormones and lower than normal levels of female hormones
- High levels of insulin—a hormone that regulates how the food you eat is changed into energy and is used by your body
- Obesity and insulin resistance

What Are the Treatments for Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome?

There are several different treatment avenues available to help alleviate many of PCOS symptoms. Your doctor may also recommend some lifestyle changes.

TREATMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CONDITION MAY INCLUDE:

- A PCOS-friendly diet low in carbohydrates and high in vegetables and fruit that will help control weight gain while strengthening your immune system and improving the way your body uses insulin and regulates your hormone levels
- A regular exercise program, such as walking or swimming, and smoking cessation
- Oral contraceptive pills will regulate your hormones and help with many of the symptoms, including irregular periods and acne
- Medication to stimulate your ovaries to ovulate
- Medication to lower your cholesterol levels
- Oral medication for type 2 diabetes that will improve your insulin resistance and lower insulin levels
- Fertility medication if you are trying to get pregnant with PCOS
- Medication that will block the effects of androgen (male hormone) on your skin and improve your acne
- Creams that slow unwanted hair growth