

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): What You Need to Know

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a disorder which affects a woman's hormonal and reproductive health. Learn about the disorder, including its symptoms and causes, and how doctors diagnose and treat PCOS.

WHAT IS POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS)?

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a common disorder in teenage girls and women that affects hormonal and reproductive health. PCOS can have potentially serious long-term effects if left untreated. PCOS can affect girls at any age after puberty begins.

WHAT CAUSES PCOS?

Doctors are not sure what causes PCOS. They believe the following might play a role:

- Genetics
- Weight gain or obesity
- Higher levels of **insulin** in the body than usual and insulin resistance. Insulin is a hormone that helps the body use sugar available in food for energy. When someone has insulin resistance, the body does not use insulin properly.
- Higher levels of **androgens** (male hormones) in the body than usual

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF PCOS?

Common symptoms of PCOS include:

- Irregular menses (periods). This may include having fewer periods, no periods or heavier periods than expected
- Excess body or facial hair (also known as **hirsutism**)
- Severe acne
- Male-pattern baldness (baldness or hair loss that in areas typically seen in older men)
- Infertility or trouble getting pregnant (in adult women)

In patients who have PCOS and obesity, which is commonly associated with PCOS, long-term risks (when left untreated) include:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Infertility (trouble getting pregnant)
- Endometrial cancer (cancer of the uterine lining)
- Heart disease
- Sleep apnea

***Diagnosis and treatment of PCOS on the
back! >>>***

HOW DO DOCTORS DIAGNOSE PCOS?

While there is no exact test for Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), your doctor can complete certain tests to help with the diagnosis.

Below are some tests the doctor may use to diagnose PCOS:

- Blood tests
- An ultrasound of the uterus and ovaries

HOW DO DOCTORS TREAT PCOS?

PCOS symptoms can be managed with help from your child's care team. Management of obesity can help lower the risk of long-term health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and sleep apnea. Early diagnosis and treatment of PCOS can reduce the risk of endometrial cancer.

One of the most important things your child can do is lose excess weight through healthy lifestyle changes. This can include a healthy diet and increased exercise.

Weight loss through healthy lifestyle changes can help with the following:

- Improved insulin resistance (improved ability to use insulin properly)
- Lower androgen levels
- Less acne
- Fewer issues of facial or body hair
- More regular menstrual cycles
- Lower risk of diabetes and heart disease
- Fewer or improved symptoms of depression

HOW DO DOCTORS TREAT PCOS? (CONTINUED)

Along with weight loss and lifestyle changes, your doctor might recommend one or more of the following to manage your child's symptoms:

- Oral contraceptives (birth control pills) to help regulate hormone levels
- Progesterone pills, taken for 10-12 days every month or every three months to induce periods
- Metformin, a medication to treat insulin resistance
- Other prescription medications to reduce facial and other body hair
- Acne treatments
- Hair removal products
- Electrolysis or laser hair removal

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