

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

The following are some of the most common symptoms of polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS):

- Severe acne or acne that occurs after adolescence and does not respond to usual treatments
 - Oily skin
 - Patches of thickened, velvety, darkened skin called acanthosis nigricans
 - Multiple small fluid-filled sacs in the ovaries
 - Irregular menstrual periods—Menstrual disorders can include absent periods, periods that occur infrequently or too frequently, heavy periods, or unpredictable periods.
 - Infertility—PCOS is one of the most common causes of female infertility.
 - Obesity—As many as 4 in 5 women with PCOS are obese.
 - Excess hair growth on the face, chest, abdomen, or upper thighs—This condition, called hirsutism, affects more than 7 in 10 women with PCOS.
- What causes PCOS?

Although the origin of PCOS is unknown, it is thought to be related to a combination of factors. Insulin resistance, higher levels of androgen hormones, and an irregular menstrual cycle are among the reasons.

- What is insulin resistance?

Insulin resistance occurs when the body's cells are unable to respond to the effects of insulin. The level of glucose in the blood rises when the body does not respond to insulin. As the body tries to transfer glucose into cells, more insulin may be created. Diabetes mellitus can be caused by insulin resistance. It's also linked to acanthosis nigricans.

- What can high levels of androgens lead to?

The ovaries may be stopped from producing an egg each month (ovulation) if higher than normal levels of androgens are produced. Many women with PCOS experience undesirable hair growth and acne as a result of high androgen levels.

- What can irregular menstrual periods lead to?

Infertility and the development of several tiny fluid-filled sacs in the ovaries can result from irregular menstrual periods. It also increases the risk for uterine and possibly ovarian cancer.

- What are the health risks for women with PCOS?

PCOS is a condition that affects the entire body, not just the reproductive system. It raises the risk of developing serious illnesses that can last a lifetime.

Insulin resistance raises the chance of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Metabolic syndrome is another condition that is linked to PCOS. Both diabetes and heart disease are linked to this syndrome.

Endometrial hyperplasia is a disorder in which the uterine lining thickens. It affects certain women with PCOS and raises the risk of endometrial cancer. Sleep abnormalities, such as sleep apnea, and depression may be more common in women with PCOS.

- Are treatments available for women with PCOS?

The complications of PCOS can be cared for with a variety of treatments. Each woman's treatment is individualized to her symptoms, other health issues, and whether or not she wishes to become pregnant.

Women with PCOS who do not want to get pregnant can utilize combined hormonal birth control medications for long-term treatment. Estrogen and progestin are both included in combined hormonal pills that control the menstrual cycle. They can also help with hirsutism, acne, and to reduce the risk of endometrial cancer.

- What can be done to increase the chances of pregnancy for women with PCOS?

The first step toward pregnancy is a successful ovulation. Weight loss may be able to help women achieve this objective if they are overweight. Ovulation can also be induced by some medications. When other therapies don't work, ovarian surgery may be an option. However, the long-term consequences of these procedures are unknown.

- What effect can weight loss have on women with PCOS?

Weight loss alone may be enough to regulate the menstrual cycle in overweight women. Menstrual periods can be made more regular with even a minor weight decrease. Weight loss has also been shown to lower cholesterol and insulin

levels, as well as alleviate symptoms like excessive hair growth and acne.

- How can insulin-sensitizing drugs help treat women with PCOS?

Insulin-sensitizing medications, which are commonly used to treat diabetes, are frequently used to treat PCOS. These medications aid the body's insulin response. They can assist women with PCOS reduce androgen levels and improve ovulation. Menstrual periods may become more regular and predictable if ovulation is restored.

- Glossary

Acanthosis Nigricans: Patches of skin that are thicker, darker, and like velvet. This condition is associated with diabetes or prediabetes.

Androgens: Hormones made by the body that cause male characteristics, such as a beard and deepening voice.

Cardiovascular Disease: Disease of the heart and blood vessels.

Cells: The smallest units of a structure in the body. Cells are the building blocks for all parts of the body.

Cholesterol: A natural substance that is a building block for cells and hormones. This substance helps carry fat through the blood vessels for use or storage in other parts of the body.

Depression: Feelings of sadness for periods of at least 2 weeks.

Diabetes Mellitus: A condition in which the levels of sugar in the blood are too high.

Endometrial Cancer: Cancer of the lining of the uterus.

Endometrial Hyperplasia: A condition in which the lining of the uterus grows too thick.

Estrogen: A female hormone produced in the ovaries.

Glucose: A sugar in the blood that is the body's main source of fuel.

Hirsutism: Excessive hair on the face, abdomen, and chest.

Hormones: Substances made in the body that control the function of cells or organs.

Infertility: The inability to get pregnant after 1 year of having regular sexual intercourse without the use of birth control.

Insulin: A hormone that lowers the levels of glucose (sugar) in the blood.

Menstrual Periods: The monthly shedding of blood and tissue from the uterus.

Metabolic Syndrome: A combination of problems, that can lead to diabetes and heart disease. These problems include high blood pressure, waist circumference of 35 inches or greater (in women), higher-than-normal blood sugar level, lower-than-normal levels of "good" cholesterol, and high levels of fats in the blood (triglycerides).

Obesity: A condition characterized by excessive body fat.

Ovaries: The organs in women that contain the eggs necessary to get pregnant and make important hormones, such as estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone.

Ovulation: The time when an ovary releases an egg.

Progestin: A synthetic form of progesterone that is similar to the hormone made naturally by the body.

Sleep Apnea: A disorder that causes interruptions of breathing during sleep.

SOURCE: [Polycystic Ovary Syndrome \(PCOS\) | ACOG](#)