

Hormonal Havoc Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Factsheet

What Is Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)?

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a disorder that occurs when levels of certain hormones in the body are abnormal. Women with PCOS may have irregular or no menstrual periods, infertility, and excess hair growth. PCOS also can cause long-term health problems in women, but it can be treated.

How Common Is PCOS?

PCOS is the most common cause of infrequent periods. Around 20 out of every 100 women have polycystic ovaries.

What Causes PCOS?

Each month an egg matures in a woman's ovary. The egg develops in a sac called a follicle. While all women produce some male sex hormones, women with PCOS produce an excess amount of these. When too much is produced, it can prevent ovulation (and therefore disturb the periods). This can result in difficulties falling pregnant. Too much androgen also can result in excess hair growth, acne and irregular bleeding. Most women with polycystic ovaries do not have the syndrome PCOS. PCOS is more than just multiple small cysts on the ovaries.

Can PCOS Cause Longer Term Problems?

Many women with PCOS produce too much insulin or the amount they produce does not work as it should. This is one reason why women with PCOS tend to gain weight or have a hard time losing weight. They also have an increased risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

How Is PCOS Diagnosed?

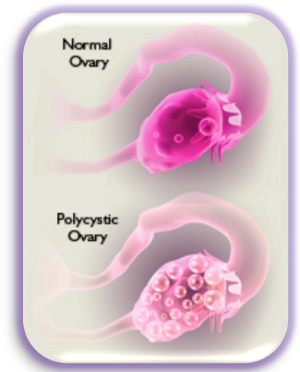
A doctor will evaluate a combination of laboratory results and clinical findings that suggest PCOS. If a woman is diagnosed with PCOS, her doctor may order tests such as lipid profiles and glucose levels to evaluate and monitor the risk of developing future complications such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The hormones tested include: Estrogen, Follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), Luteinising hormone (LH), Prolactin and Testosterone.

An ultrasound exam may be done to look for small cysts on the ovary.

What Are The Treatment Options?

PCOS is a lifelong condition, but it can be treated in a number of ways. Treatment depends on the symptoms and whether or not a woman wants to become pregnant. Long-term treatment may be needed to help prevent endometrial cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Following a balanced diet and taking regular exercise are important. This improves the body's use of insulin and can help reduce the long-term health risks associated with PCOS.



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