

POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS)

What is PCOS?

-PCOS is a condition that affects your hormones. It not only affects the reproductive tract, but the entire body as well. It is a hormonal imbalance causing higher levels of androgens in a woman's body that prevents the ovaries from releasing eggs. The ovaries have small cysts inside. Androgens affect the endometrial layer, causing it to thicken, which increases the risk of endometrial cancer. It is the most common cause of female infertility.

Risk factors of PCOS:

- Obesity
- Genetics
- Lifestyle and diet

Signs and symptoms of PCOS:

- Irregular or absent menstrual periods
- Extra hair grown on the face
- Acne that is difficult to resolve
- Weight gain and difficulty losing weight
- Patches of dark velvety brown skin on the neck and other areas, such as under the arms and in the groin area

Diagnostic studies for PCOS:

- Ultrasound imaging of the ovaries
- Blood test to check hormone levels and glucose levels (HbA1c)
- Physical exam looking specifically for excess facial hair, hair loss, acne, or discolored skin and skin tags
- Asking questions about your biological family's medical history

Prevention of PCOS:

- Encouraging lifestyle changes of increasing exercise and consuming a heart healthy diet
- Managing sugar intake
- Using birth control to lessen acne and excessive hair growth

Treatment options of PCOS:

- Metformin for high blood glucose levels
- Spironolactone to lessen hair growth
- Oral contraceptives
- Living a healthier lifestyle

Reference: *PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome): Symptoms & treatment*. Cleveland Clinic. (2025, August 11). <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/8316-polycystic-ovary-syndrome-pcos>

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