



Editorial

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Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) : Symptoms, Causes, and Treatment

What is PCOS ?

PCOS is a problem with hormones that affects women during their childbearing years (ages 15 to 44). Between 2.2 and 26.7 percent of women in this age group have PCOS.

Many women have PCOS but don't know it. In one study, up to 70 percent of women with PCOS hadn't been diagnosed.

PCOS affects a woman's ovaries, the reproductive organs that produce estrogen and progesterone — hormones that regulate the menstrual cycle. The ovaries also produce a small amount of male hormones called androgens.

The ovaries release eggs to be fertilized by a man's sperm. The release of an egg each month is called ovulation.

Follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH) control ovulation. FSH stimulates the ovary to produce a follicle — a sac that contains an egg — and then LH triggers the ovary to release a mature egg.

Symptoms : 6 common symptoms of PCOS —

- Your cycles are irregular.
- You're an adult, but you just can't shake your acne.
- You're growing hair in unexpected places.
- You can't get pregnant.
- You're pre-diabetic, or have type 2 diabetes.
- You've gained weight.

So what can you do?

If you've noticed multiple of these symptoms—especially missed periods, acne, and hair growth—check in with your doctor or endocrinologist for a blood test. Once you get results, the doctor may also suggest a vaginal ultrasound to check for cysts, although not all women who have PCOS develop ovarian cysts. Unfortunately, there isn't a standard treatment for PCOS so treatment is very

personalized, Dokras says. Doctors currently suggest a combination of medication and lifestyle changes to treat whichever symptoms you're experiencing.

Doctors diagnose PCOS if women have at least two of three main symptoms — high androgen levels, irregular periods, and cysts in the ovaries. A pelvic exam, blood tests, and ultrasound can confirm the diagnosis.

Pregnancy and PCOS :

PCOS can make it harder to get pregnant, and it can increase your risk for pregnancy complications and miscarriage. Weight loss and other treatments can improve your odds of having a healthy pregnancy.

Diet and lifestyle tips to treat PCOS :

PCOS treatment starts with lifestyle changes like diet and exercise. Losing just 5 to 10 percent of your body weight if you're overweight can help improve your symptoms.

Common medical treatments :

Birth control pills and the diabetes drug metformin can help bring back a normal menstrual cycle. Clomiphene and surgery improve fertility in women with PCOS. Hair removal medicines can rid women of unwanted hair.

When to see a doctor

- You've missed periods and you're not pregnant.
- You have symptoms of PCOS, such as hair growth on your face and body.
- You've been trying to get pregnant for more than 12 months but haven't been successful.
- You have symptoms of diabetes, such as excess thirst or hunger, blurred vision, or unexplained weight loss.
- If you have PCOS, plan regular visits with your primary care doctor. You'll need regular tests to check for diabetes, high blood pressure, and other possible complications.