

Spotlight on Polycystic Ovary Disease (PCOD)

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I see many women with Polycystic Ovary Disease (PCOD) in my clinical practice. A diagnosis of PCOD can usually be confirmed with the help of a detailed history and appropriate tests. Treating PCOD varies according to individual needs and should combine lifestyle changes with nutrition advice (and medication if necessary). It is important that women have access to reliable information and an experienced specialist to help them understand the condition better.

8 Signs that You May Have PCOD.

PCOD is a common condition: 1 in 10 women suffer from some or all of the following symptoms.

1. Irregular periods
2. Increased facial/body hair
3. Acne
4. Weight Gain
5. Scalp hair loss
6. Fertility problems
7. Excessive daytime sleepiness
8. Depression and Anxiety

Frequently Asked Questions:

What causes PCOD?

Hormonal imbalance and insulin resistance (where the body does not use sugars from one's diet efficiently enough) are thought to be responsible. The condition can run in families and being overweight can also trigger the onset of PCOD.

How is PCOD diagnosed?

- Detailed history by your doctor. You may be referred to a specialist.
- Measuring body weight, height, waist size and blood pressure is helpful.
- An internal examination is not needed to diagnose PCOD.
- Appropriate scans and blood tests will help confirm the diagnosis.
- A pelvic ultrasound scan often shows tiny painless non-cancerous cysts on the ovaries.

How is PCOD treated?

The first line of treatment recommended by doctors to treat PCOD is to follow a balanced lifestyle.

7 Lifestyle Changes to Help Control PCOD.

1. **Ditch bad habits:** Avoid smoking and drinking too much alcohol. Avoid trans fats, ready meals, processed foods, fizzy drinks, fruit juices, sugary foods, and greasy fried foods – these all cause surges in blood sugar and make it harder to lose weight.
TIP: Losing 5% -10% of your body weight by sensibly reducing calorie intake can help.
2. **Exercise** is very helpful in managing PCOD as it makes the cells in our body more sensitive to insulin, an important hormone that is needed to help the sugars from our diet to enter the cells to be used for providing energy.
TIP: Combine regular cardio exercise with weight training.
3. **Nutrition:** Focus on foods that are closest to their natural forms that tend to be absorbed slowly, leaving you fuller for longer. Eat a varied plant-based diet rich in beans, lentils, vegetables, fruits. Find time to cook simple tasty dishes such as salads, soups and stir fries.
TIP: Follow the 80:20 rule (Eat well majority of the time)
4. **Stress:** Consider meditation, mindfulness and yoga to help manage stress in your life.
TIP: Thinking of three things every day that make you happy/grateful can help reduce stress levels
5. **Sleep:** Ensure a good night's sleep, allowing your body to repair itself.
TIP: Avoid caffeine/TV just before bed. Camomile tea and a good book often help.
6. **Acne:** Treatment with skincare regimes or medications in time may help prevent scarring.
TIP: The Oral Contraceptive Pill (COCP) helps with both acne and unwanted facial hair.
7. **Mood disorders:** Psychological issues such as depression and anxiety should be addressed.
TIP: Being in nature & enjoying time with friends/family can help lift mood. Consider counselling.

Will I have problems having a baby?

Not all women have this problem. Following a healthy lifestyle, and losing weight can significantly improve fertility chances. There are simple treatments available for most cases with only a small number of women needing to see a fertility specialist.

Learn more about PCOD online: <http://www.womenforwomenshealth.co.uk/pcos.html>

- What foods should I eat and what should I avoid?
- Are there medical treatments for PCOD?
- Will I require regular follow up?
- What are the long term problems with PCOD?
- Are there any groups I can contact?

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