



District Endocrine

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

- What is PCOS?
 - PCOS is thought to be the cause of up to 90% of ovulation disorders.
 - It is characterized by evidence of excess male hormones (i.e., facial/chest/back hair, acne), irregular cycles and ideally polycystic ovaries on ultrasound.
 - Usually patients have other metabolic syndromes as well: obesity, high blood pressure, prediabetes, etc.
 - It is a complex and sometimes confusing picture, and because of this it is a diagnosis of EXCLUSION, because other hormones can mimic the PCOS picture.
- How do we diagnose PCOS?
 - We have to exclude other causes: gynecologic disorders, thyroid disorders, pituitary disorders and a certain type of adrenal disorder.
 - After excluding other causes, we consider 3 criteria, and if the patient has 2 of them, we can call the diagnosis.
 - Physical OR lab evidence of excess male hormones
 - Physical OR lab evidence of ovulation dysfunction
 - Polycystic ovaries on ultrasound
 - It's harder to diagnose in adolescents because sometimes irregular cycles and cystic ovaries are just part of the NORMAL development.
- I have PCOS, now what?
 - The diabetes medication metformin used to be prescribed just for PCOS, but this is no longer recommended.
 - It will be used, however, if the patient meets diabetes or prediabetes criteria.
 - Oral contraceptive pills are the first line treatment.
 - If additional control of masculine hair growth is needed, Spironolactone is the drug of choice.
- Fertility and PCOS
 - Getting pregnant can be more difficult because of the irregularity of the cycles, and determining for sure if each cycle has a successful ovulation.
 - **It is fundamental to control and optimize all metabolic syndromes prior to conception: BMI, glucose, blood pressure, etc. so lifestyle is key!**



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- If a couple has difficulty conceiving there are a number of medications that can be used to assist in reproduction. Either endocrine or OB/GYN can facilitate this.
 - If these fail a reproductive endocrinologist can assist with IVF.

Resources

- Mayo Clinic: PCOS www.mayoclinic.org
- American College of OB/GYN <https://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Polycystic-Ovary-Syndrome-PCOS>

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Disclaimer:

This article is not medical advice. It is intended for general informational purposes and is not meant to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. If you think you may have a medical emergency, immediately call your physician or dial 911.