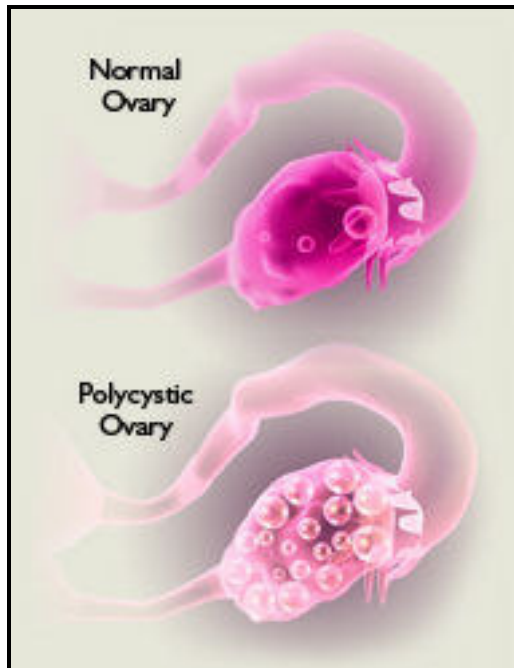

What is PCOS?

(Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome)



Information for Patients

Center for PCOS Studies

<http://www.pcosinfo.org>

The Basics of PCOS:

P = Poly (Many)

C = Cystic (Cysts)

O = Ovarian (related to your ovaries)

S = Syndrome (group of symptoms)

PCOS is an endocrine and metabolic disorder that affects 5-10% of all women., so you're not alone.

If you have PCOS, something is wrong with the hormones your body makes and the processes your body uses to make energy and keep you moving.

If you think you have PCOS, these are some of the symptoms to watch out for:

Symptoms

- Acne
- Weight problems
- Dark patches of skin
- Few or no periods
- High blood pressure
- Hormone imbalances
- Insulin resistance
- Infertility
- Pearl-like ovarian cysts
- Thinning of scalp hair

- Too much face or body hair

If you've just been diagnosed or think you might have PCOS, these symptoms may sound really scary.

The **good** news: Women with PCOS usually don't have all the symptoms. They might have only a few or even just two.

The **bad** news: Women with PCOS are at risk for Diabetes, heart disease, thyroid problems, and even high blood pressure.

Treatment and management can lower your risks and keep the news good, so it's important to talk to your doctor.

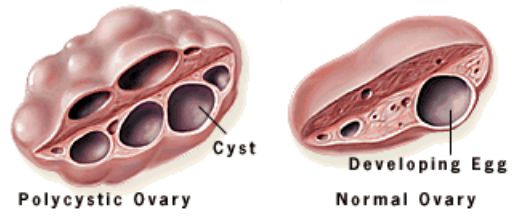
What are the Cysts?

You probably know another female who has been given medication to help treat an ovarian cyst. PCOS cysts not like are the painful cysts you might have heard about.

PCOS cysts are small and painless. They happen because of a hormone problem that causes a woman to create more follicles than she needs.

A follicle is where the egg grows before it's released during ovulation. Usually, a woman ovulates and the extra follicles shrink and disappear.

In women with PCOS, the body makes more follicles. When ovulation fails, those extra follicles are all left sitting in the ovary. Here's a comparison:



How to find out if you have PCOS . . .

Your doctor will need to test your blood and check your hormones, insulin levels, and sugar levels. Your doctor will also need to look at your ovaries and talk to you about your symptoms. You might be sent to a specialist for ultrasounds.

Why all the tests? Can't your doctor just look at your ovaries? That's the tricky

part. You can have PCOS without having cysts. You can even have polycystic ovaries without having PCOS.

Only your doctor can tell you whether you have PCOS.

Treating PCOS

PCOS symptoms are different from one woman to the next. Once your tests are complete, your doctor will discuss the right treatment plan for you.

Most women with PCOS visit the doctor because they are missing periods. If this is one of your symptoms, seeking treatment is important. Not having a period increases your risk for some types of cancer.

Treating PCOS is all about learning to manage your symptoms. Managing your PCOS might mean changing your diet, taking the birth control pill to help you have a regular period, or it might mean a lot more. Your doctor can help you understand what your PCOS means for your lifestyle.

If you are one of the many women whose PCOS means you have trouble

losing weight, there are some drugs like Metformin that may be help you.

It's important to talk to your doctor.

Living with PCOS

If you do have PCOS, don't panic. The list of symptoms is scary, but if you live a healthy lifestyle, you may never develop more symptoms than you have now. Some women don't even know they have PCOS until they try to get pregnant. Other women aren't as lucky.

PCOS doesn't have to control your life. It doesn't mean giving up on becoming pregnant, and it also isn't a death sentence. If you work with your doctor to manage your PCOS, you can live a long healthy life.

PCOS is different for every woman. Only you and your doctor can work together to decide the best way for you to live healthy with PCOS.

For more information, please e-mail questions@pcosinfo.org or call 1-800-555-5555.
