

# Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)



Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (also called Polycystic Ovaries or PCOS) disproportionately affects Pacific Islander women so it is important to address this issue for the teen girls so they can treat, or hopefully prevent, this condition.

The purpose of this PowerPoint presentation is for the participants to understand the symptoms and risks of PCOS and prevention measures.

Presenter's Notes are included for this PowerPoint, but for more information, go to:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health:  
Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/polycystic-ovary-syndrome.pdf> or

<http://www.girlshealth.gov/body/pcos/index.cfm>



# PCOS

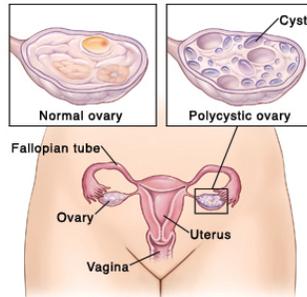
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- A very common hormonal disorder among Pacific Islander women
- 20% of Pacific Islander women have PCOS

PCOS is a health problem that affects a women's menstrual cycle. It is unusually common in Pacific Islander women; they are twice as likely as the average population to have PCOS. PCOS can occur in girls as young as 11 years old so it is important to address this issue early as the best treatment for PCOS is prevention.

# What is PCOS?

- The name *Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome* refers to the enlarged ovaries that contain many very small cysts



Women with PCOS typically have high levels of androgens, also known as male hormones. They also have higher levels of insulin production that can result in excess weight gain.

The term “polycystic ovaries” refers to the many tiny cysts, or bumps, in the ovaries. These cysts themselves are not harmful and do not need to be removed.



## What causes PCOS?

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- A hormone imbalance causes the *symptoms* of PCOS
  - **Insulin resistance:** the body cannot use insulin properly
  - **High testosterone:** the body produces too much testosterone

Although the exact cause is unknown, we do know that it is a result of a hormone imbalance in your brain and ovaries. Also, many women with PCOS have too much insulin, a hormone that turns food into energy. Having too much insulin may cause your body to make too much testosterone. This high testosterone level would account for some of the symptoms, like excess body hair or irregular periods, that we will talk about in later slides.

**Insulin Resistance** (Hyperinsulinemia): as a potent growth hormone, is associated with weight gain - makes it possible to gain weight very easily despite good nutrition and exercise. It also leads to high androgens which may lead to infertility, acne, facial hair growth, and hair loss on head.



## What causes PCOS?

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- Cause of PCOS is unknown
  - May run in families
    - Daughter of women with PCOS are at an increased risk of developing PCOS

If you know someone in your family has PCOS, it is important that you take extra care to watch for signs and symptoms of PCOS so you can treat it as soon as possible.



Most Common

## Signs & Symptoms of PCOS

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- Irregular or absent period
- Infertility- not able to have children

Most symptoms are a result of the hormone imbalance.

Irregular or absent period is the most common symptom.

Women with PCOS can still have a healthy uterus, but many have difficulty getting pregnant.

Most Common

## Signs & Symptoms of PCOS

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- Hair loss from head



One sign of PCOS is hair loss or the thinning of hair.

Most Common

## Signs & Symptoms of PCOS

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- Acne



Another sign of PCOS is acne, oily skin, and/or dandruff.

Most Common

## Signs & Symptoms of PCOS

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- Patches of dark skin on the back of the neck or other areas



Women with PCOS may also have dark patches of skin or skin tags, excess skin in the armpits or neck.

Most Common

## Signs & Symptoms of PCOS

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- Excess hair on face and/or chin



Women with PCOS can also have increased amount of hair on the face, chest, arms or legs.



Most Common

## Signs & Symptoms of PCOS

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- Weight gain and/or trouble losing weight
- Type 2 Diabetes

Being overweight can increase your risk for getting PCOS, but also having PCOS can make it more difficult to lose or even maintain a healthy weight. If you are already overweight, and you continue to gain or are having difficulty losing weight, especially around the waist, you might have PCOS.

Because PCOS is related to weight gain, women with PCOS may also develop Type 2 Diabetes.



Most Common

## Signs & Symptoms of PCOS

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- Not all symptoms may be present
- Severity of symptoms varies

Women with PCOS will have different signs and symptoms.

Other symptoms such as anxiety, depression, are less noticeable because they aren't physical signs or symptoms. However, our mental health and our physical health are closely linked so it is important to address these symptoms as well.



## Who has PCOS?

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- PCOS affects 7-10% of **all** women of childbearing age.
- PCOS affects 20% of Pacific Islander women.
- Many women do not know they have PCOS.

Pacific Islander women of child-bearing age are at an even higher risk.



## Do I have PCOS?

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- Only your health care provider can tell for sure if you have PCOS.

If you have some or all of the signs & symptoms, you might have PCOS. There can be other reasons why you might have one or more of these signs & symptoms.



## PCOS increases the risk of...

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- Type 2 Diabetes
- Infertility
- Heart Disease
- Certain Cancers
- Obesity

In addition to the signs, symptoms and complications of PCOS, many other conditions and diseases are related to PCOS.

50% of women with PCOS will develop Type 2 Diabetes before the age of 40.



## PCOS and Infertility

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- Infertility is the most common medical complication associated with PCOS
  - Occurs in approximately 75% of women with PCOS

Women with PCOS do not make all the hormones needed for an egg to fully mature. Plus, the ovaries make hormones which prevent ovulation.



## PCOS and Infertility

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- Weight loss of 5 - 10 % of body weight may improve fertility of women with PCOS
  - This could mean that even losing 8 pounds can make a difference!

For a 160 lb women, this means losing even just 8-16 lbs can make a difference. With PCOS it is harder to lose weight though so if you can prevent the excess weight gain you will be far better off.



## Emotional effects of PCOS

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- Embarrassed about appearance
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Concern about ability to have children

PCOS can be very difficult if not treated early. The symptoms may get worse over time.



## How is PCOS treated?

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- PCOS is not curable, but the symptoms are treatable by:
  - A healthy lifestyle
  - Maintaining a healthy weight
  - Medications prescribed by your doctor

Medication may have unwanted side effects. Diet and exercise may be all that is needed.



## How is PCOS treated?

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- A healthy diet
  - Limit processed foods (cereals, juice...)
  - Limit foods with added sugars
    - Sodas
    - Cookies
    - Sugary drinks
    - Candy

These are great recommendations for prevention too.



## How is PCOS treated?

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- A healthy diet
  - More whole grains
  - Lean meats
  - More fruits and vegetables
  - Non-fat dairy products



## How is PCOS treated?

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- Physical activity
  - 60 minutes every day
  - Helps maintain weight
  - Helps with depression and anxiety

Talk to your health care provider if you think you may have PCOS.



**Questions ?**