

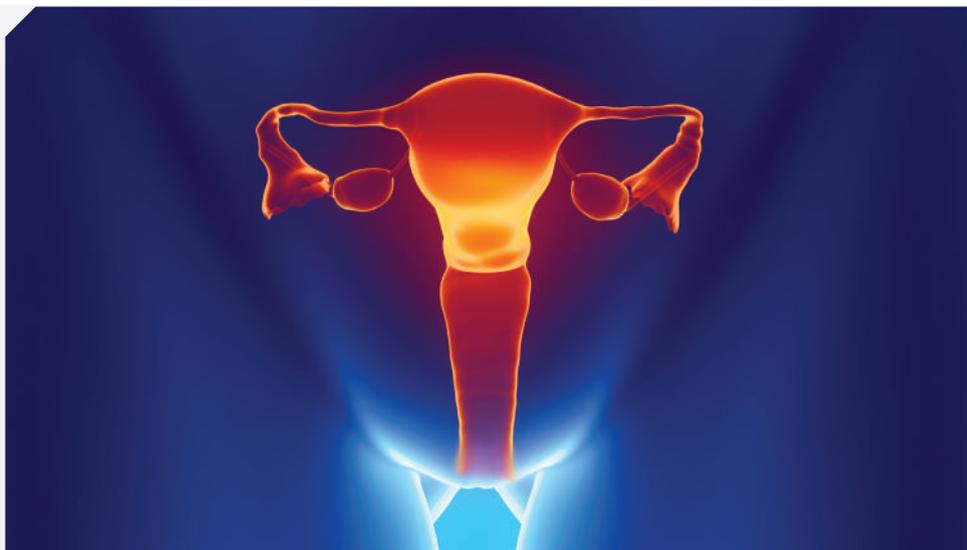
# 3 common symptoms of PCOS

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is a hormonal disorder characterised by infrequent or prolonged menstrual periods and/or an excess of male hormones.



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PCOS affects 5–15% of women of reproductive age. Because it can affect fertility and result in metabolic or cardiovascular complications in the long term, it is important to diagnose the condition early so that it can be managed. While the cause for PCOS is unknown, it is strongly associated with insulin resistance, diabetes and obesity. There may also be a genetic component to the syndrome.

Stay alert to these three common symptoms:

- 1** **Periods** Infrequent, irregular or prolonged periods could be a sign of PCOS.
- 2** **Androgen** Elevated levels of this male hormone causes excess facial/body hair, acne and male-pattern baldness.
- 3** **Polycystic ovaries** In this condition, the ovaries are enlarged and contain follicles that surround the eggs, which could impair their function and limit fertility.

### Early diagnosis and treatment matters

If you experience two or more of the above symptoms, you may have PCOS.

PCOS is linked to a range of complications, such as infertility. It can also increase the risk of gestational diabetes or pregnancy-induced high blood pressure and miscarriage or premature birth. Other metabolic impacts include high blood pressure, high blood sugar and severe liver inflammation caused by fat accumulation; another effect is abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels, which increases the risk of sleep apnoea, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes or prediabetes.

PCOS is also associated with depression, anxiety and eating disorders, abnormal uterine bleeding and cancer of the uterine lining. Early management can prevent these problems and address issues such as infertility.

To test for PCOS, your doctor will take a comprehensive medical history that will include tracking your menstrual periods and weight changes. He or she may also check for signs of excess hair growth, insulin resistance and acne. There is typically a pelvic exam and/or an ultrasound to assess the reproductive organs for masses, growths or other abnormalities. Blood tests will also be done.

Treatment is geared towards a holistic approach to:

- Regulate the menstrual cycle through hormone treatment or birth control pills
- Treat subfertility issues via hormonal ovulation induction, keyhole surgery to remove the growths on the ovaries, or infertility treatment such as in vitro fertilisation (IVF)
- Reduce excessive hair growth using medication or aesthetic treatments
- Screen for and prevent long-term complications, such as diabetes and hypertension 