



Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

What is it?

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) can occur when a woman has an imbalance of sex hormones, such as estrogen, progesterone, and androgen. This often causes changes in menstrual cycles and ovulation, cysts in the ovaries, infertility, and a variety of other symptoms. Women with PCOS commonly experience weight gain, and may have a difficult time losing weight. This further contributes to the increased risk of a variety of serious health conditions, such as:

- Obesity
- Insulin resistance
- Pre-diabetes or Type 2 diabetes (often before age 40)
- High cholesterol and triglycerides
- High blood pressure
- Anxiety and depression
- Heart attacks
- Endometrial cancer

Treatment

Your doctor may recommend various medications, treatments, or procedures to treat your PCOS. Fortunately, research has also shown that lifestyle changes and weight loss can improve many of the risks and side effects associated with PCOS.

Lifestyle changes

Making changes to your diet and lifestyle can improve symptoms of PCOS, as well as improve overall health and longevity. Try these strategies:

- Work toward a healthy weight. Even a loss of 5-10% can improve hormone balance.
- Focus on fiber. Vegetables, fruit, beans, and whole grains will fill you up, help balance your blood sugar, and provide many healthy nutrients. Most adult women need 21-25 grams per day.
- Eat protein foods regularly. Consuming small amounts of lean meat, eggs, beans, or low fat dairy at your meals and snacks will help keep you satisfied and stabilize blood sugar. Visit our [Protein](#) information to learn how much you need, and how much is too much.
- Limit processed foods and added sugars found in sweetened beverages, fast food, and packaged snacks. These often provide excess calories with fewer nutrients.
- Increase physical activity by doing things you enjoy. This can help improve your weight, insulin sensitivity, mood, and overall health.
- Avoid smoking. Smoking will further increase your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

PCOS is a serious condition, but there is a lot you can do to lessen the impact on your life and future health. Visit our [Weight Management](#) area to learn about controlling your weight in a healthy way.