

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

PCOS is a common endocrine disorder affecting approximately 5% of women. There are many signs and symptoms of PCOS including menstrual irregularities, difficulty getting pregnant, insulin resistance, excessive hair growth, and difficulty losing weight.

Diagnosis:

There is no definitive blood test or method to diagnose PCOS – it is a collection of symptoms and findings including but not limited to:

- 1) Chronic anovulation (not releasing an egg each month leading to irregular menstrual periods)
- 2) Chronic hyperandrogenism (extra male hormones leading to excessive hair growth or acne)
- 3) Polycystic appearing ovaries on ultrasound

Evaluation:

At Pacific NW Fertility, you will meet with a reproductive endocrinologist (a female hormone specialist) who will do a thorough assessment including a detailed interview, ultrasound, and blood tests. This testing will help diagnose and determine whether you would benefit from treatment for PCOS.

Infertility and PCOS:

Patients with PCOS often have difficulty conceiving due to chronic anovulation – the hormonal imbalance interrupts ovulation (release of the egg).

Insulin Resistance and PCOS:

Patients with PCOS can have insulin resistance and may benefit from an insulin-sensitizing medication such as metformin (Gluophage®).

Risks of PCOS:

Patients with PCOS may be at risk for endometrial cancer, cholesterol abnormalities, insulin resistance, gestational diabetes, and obesity over their lifetime. You should discuss these risks and their prevention with your provider.

Treatment of PCOS:

Treatment depends on your goals. If fertility is your immediate goal, then ovulation induction with a medication may be recommended. If fertility is not your immediate plan, other medications and lifestyle modifications may help you prevent the long-term risks of PCOS discussed above.

Whatever your concerns and goals may be, the providers at Pacific NW Fertility can help diagnose, treat, and educate you about PCOS.