



Stanford
HEALTH CARE

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

PCOS is a condition that usually presents with infertility and infrequent or absent menstrual periods. Other symptoms that may be seen in PCOS patients are increased facial or body hair growth, increased acne, obesity and enlarged ovaries with multiple follicles present when visualized by ultrasound. Women with PCOS may have an increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular heart disease.

During pregnancy there are increased maternal risks including miscarriage, gestational diabetes and high blood pressure. PCOS women desiring pregnancy should attempt weight loss to a BMI (body mass index) less than 25 and do regular exercise. For infrequent periods, Metformin, an insulin-sensitizing drug may induce more frequent ovulation. Clomiphene citrate or injectable gonadotropins (FSH) are usually the first line treatment to induce ovulation.

For patients who fail medication therapy, surgery can be done. Wedge resection of the ovaries or ovarian drilling may induce ovulation, but can cause adhesions that may reduce fertility.

PCOS patients not desiring pregnancy may use oral contraceptive pills to correct the menstrual disorder and prevent endometrial cancer. Lifestyle changes including weight loss and exercise may reduce diabetes and cardiovascular disease.