

Yarning
with
Tidda's
about
**Polycystic
Ovary
Syndrome
(PCOS)**





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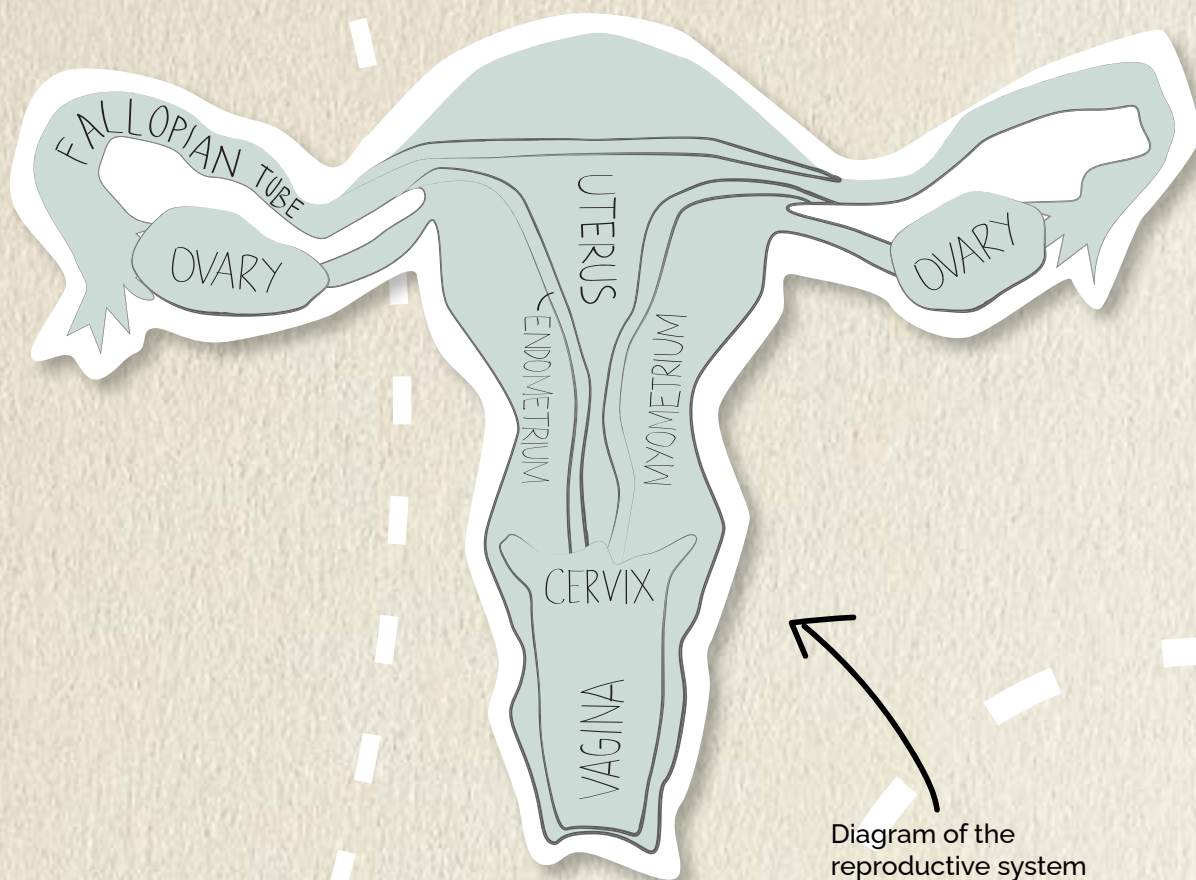


What is PCOS?

Even though PCOS is called polycystic ovary syndrome, it's important to know your ovaries aren't sick. The name is from a long time ago, and we know more now. You don't actually have abnormal cysts on your ovaries, just tiny eggs. It's good to understand this, so you don't worry about cysts bursting, because that's not common.

PCOS is about body chemicals called hormones. These chemicals make our body do things. Like when young girls start having monthlies/periods. Your mothers, aunts, and sisters might have PCOS too because it is common to have family members with PCOS.

Lots of women get PCOS (about one in eight), but it's more common in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters.



You might have some of these things:

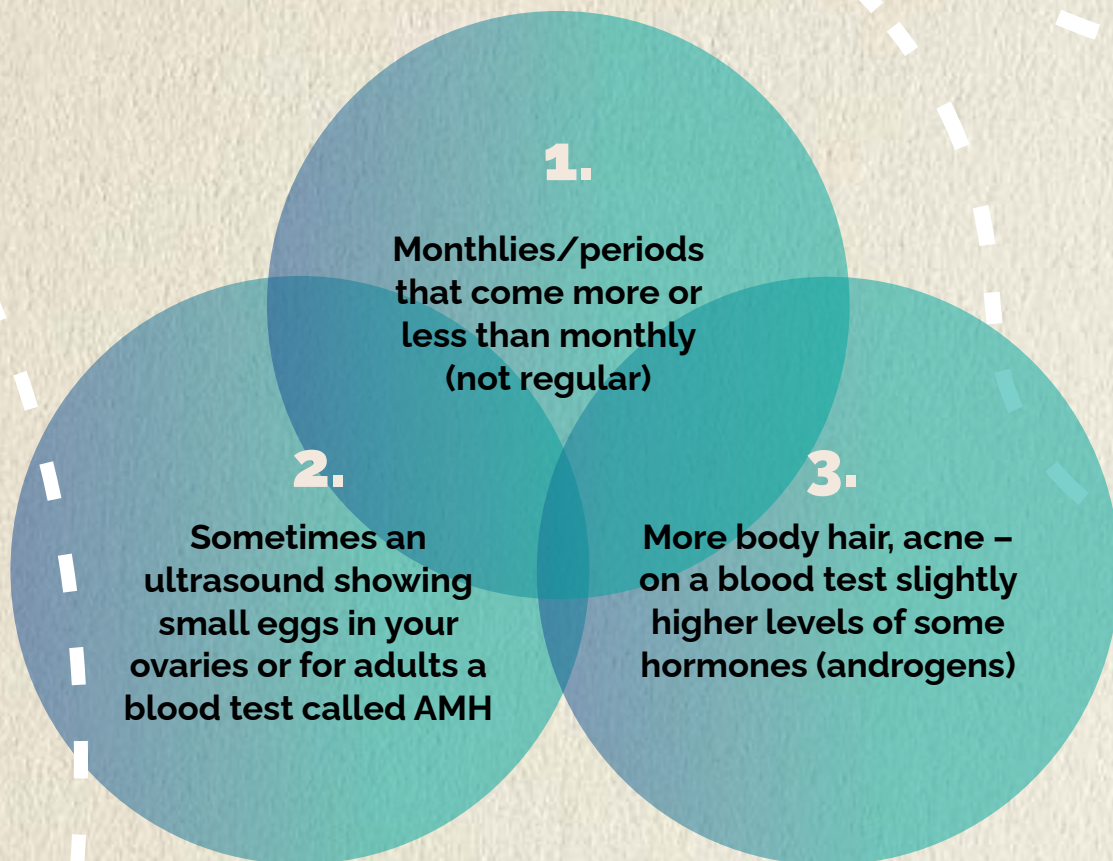
- **monthlies/periods coming anytime - could be early or late**
- **big mood changes, feeling worried a lot**
- **more hair on the face, stomach or back**
- **living in a bigger body**
- **trouble getting pregnant**

Not all women feel the same with PCOS. Each person has their own experience of PCOS and that may be different to others. Also, PCOS feels different at different times in your life. There is no cure for PCOS but there is a lot you can do to feel as good as possible.

Diagnosis

PCOS comes from different things like family and how you live. If your mum or granny had PCOS, you might get it too.

To find out if you have PCOS, you need two of these:



If you're on the pill, or some other forms of contraception, it's hard for doctors to check for PCOS. The doctor might ask you to stop the pill for 3 months. If you do, make sure you use another way to stop getting pregnant.





Partnership

When you seek treatment, it is important that you decide what you want the doctor to focus on. Discuss the things that are bothering you and work together to improve these.

Treatment

It is common for your doctor to suggest you take the contraceptive pill. This is to help regulate your hormone levels. It can help make your periods regular and also reduce some symptoms like body hair.

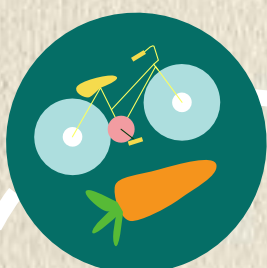
If you are worried about taking the pill, discuss with your doctor about other options.



PCOS and energy

There's a body chemical called insulin that controls sugar which is energy.

Women with PCOS can have problems with sugar getting from your blood into your cells where you can use it as energy.



Moving around and eating good food, helps control this insulin problem.

Emotional wellbeing

You may feel that your emotions are up and down a lot. Or you might worry most of the time. You may feel that it's hard to get through things because you are feeling down. This is common in PCOS.

It's really important to check in on your feelings.

Ask yourself:

Do I feel alright?

Am I still happy doing things I usually like?

Do I feel tired or worried a lot?

If these feelings bother you, it's okay to ask for help. You can talk to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SEW worker at your local Aboriginal community health place, or a mental health professional, **or any health professional**. Also, moving around more and spending time with friends can help you feel better.





Regular periods

Lots of women with PCOS have monthlies/periods that are not regular. The pill or other contraception treatments can mask this and it can help if you can remember if your periods were irregular in the past.

It may come early or late, be heavy or light bleeding. It's important to either have hormones balanced by the pill or to have periods at a minimum 4 times each year to keep your uterus healthy, and to help to get pregnant if you want to.

To help make your monthlies regular, you can:

- move around more
- eat good food
- use medicines like the pill or metformin they help your hormones work better.

With PCOS, it can be easier to put on weight because a body chemical called insulin doesn't work well. Aim first to try to maintain your weight by being active and eating well.

There is no special diet for PCOS. Just a healthy diet.

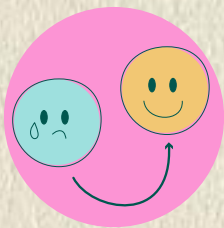
Eat good food like lots of plants, like fruit and veggies, and lean meat (if not vegetarian). Try not to have too much fried stuff or things with extra sugar, salt, or fat. **Avoid take away foods.**

Weight stigma

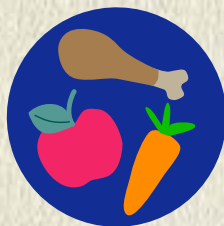
Having PCOS often means you are bigger than others. Women say they often feel like people judge them for living in a bigger body. It's important that your doctor treats the symptoms that matter to you and not just focus on weight. Your doctor should ask permission to discuss your weight with you also.

Try to focus on your whole health rather than just weight. Emotional wellbeing and other symptoms may be the most important things to you to get help with.

Try to:



Monitor your emotional wellbeing and take action early to try to get support or improve this by other ways that work for you.



Eat lots of fruit and veggies and some lean meat.



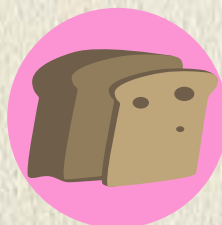
Take healthy snacks, like fruit, when you're out.



Don't eat too much, especially if you're tired or worried.



Drink mostly water, and drink lots.



Eat brown foods like whole grain bread.



Make food at home so you know what's in it.



Getting pregnant

If you want to have children you may have no problems getting pregnant. Many with PCOS do have difficulties and so it's good to check in with your doctor about this.

The main problem comes from monthlies/periods not coming regularly and not always having an egg ready.

If you want a baby, it's good to think about it before turning 30. This is when it gets a bit harder for most women to have babies.

If you do have problems getting pregnant it's good to be as active as you can and eat well most of the time. This can improve your chances of getting pregnant. Living in a bigger body can make it harder to get pregnant, so being as healthy as you can will help a lot.

If you still have difficulty, there is medication that can help. Discuss with your doctor.

It's always good to see the doctor early and have a yarn about what to do.

Hair and skin

PCOS can give you more hair on the face, tummy, and back and make hair thinner on the head because of male-type chemicals in the body. More hair can be hard for some women, but there are ways to handle it.

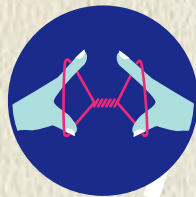
You can try things like:



Waxing



Hair removal creams



Threading



Electrolysis



Shaving



Laser can help too, but be sure the person doing it knows their stuff. Some medicines, like the pill with other drugs, can help too. Have a yarn with your doctor to learn more.

**Also, there are medications that can help.
Discuss with your doctor.**



For further information about this publication contact:

Monash Centre for Health Research & Implementation (MCHRI)

43-51 Kanooka Grove
Clayton, VIC 3168
Australia

Email: rhonda.garad@monash.edu

Website: www.mchri.org.au

Useful links

To access further PCOS tools, go to:

[www.mchri.org.au/guidelines-resources/
community/pcos-resources](http://www.mchri.org.au/guidelines-resources/community/pcos-resources)

To sign up to our free PCOS app, go to:

www.askpcos.org

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