

What is PCOS?

PCOS stands for **Polycystic Ovary Syndrome**. PCOS is a health condition where certain hormones in your body are out of balance. The ovaries produce more than the normal amount of androgens (male hormones). This can cause changes to your period, issues with ovulation (when an ovary lets go of an egg), and small cysts to form on your ovaries.

What causes PCOS?

- **The exact cause of PCOS is not known.** It is believed that when certain hormones levels are out of balance that this causes PCOS symptoms.
- PCOS is also linked with **higher levels of insulin in the blood**. Insulin controls your blood sugar levels. Many people with PCOS have insulin resistance, which means their body does not respond normally to insulin, causing their blood sugar levels to go up. This can lead to health problems like prediabetes and type 2 diabetes.

What are the symptoms?

Irregular or infrequent periods. This could mean you have no period at all or periods that don't happen very often.	*Infertility (trouble getting pregnant). If you don't ovulate regularly, it can make it hard to get pregnant.
Increased hair growth on face and body.	Weight gain.
Thinning hair or hair loss on the head.	Problems with acne.

***If you are having trouble getting pregnant, talk with a CHN provider about your options.**

How is PCOS diagnosed?

- **There are no tests that can tell you for sure if you have PCOS.** To get diagnosed, your provider will ask about your symptoms, do blood tests, and a pelvic exam. Your provider may also order an ultrasound to get a picture of your ovaries to see if they have cysts.

What are the treatments?

- **Birth control pills with estrogen and progestin** are the most common treatment to help with getting your periods to be regular.
- Medicines are available that can help with your **lowering your insulin levels**.
- **Anti-androgen drugs** (drugs that block the effects of male hormones) and **birth control pills** can help with treating increased hair growth.
- **Exercise and eating healthy** can help with weight loss. Ask your provider about speaking to a CHN nutritionist or signing up for a wellness class.