

# POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (STEIN-LEVENTHAL SYNDROME)

## AN OVERVIEW

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### IMPORTANT

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### Introduction

Polycystic ovary syndrome, also known as Stein-Leventhal syndrome, is a disorder marked by a failure to ovulate or menstruate in a woman, an abnormal growth of body hair (hirsutism), and not being able to become pregnant.

Polycystic ovary syndrome is caused by the endocrine gland getting out of balance with higher levels of some hormones (testosterone, oestrogen, and luteinising) and lower giving off of follicle-stimulating hormone.

Lower levels of follicle-stimulating hormone cause the ovarian follicles to grow only partly, which then do not release eggs (ova). Many lumps (cysts) may grow in the ovary.

(Picture right - Enlarged Polycystic Ovary)

The affected ovary often gets to be twice the usual size, and is covered by a smooth, pearly-white capsule. The higher level of a female sex hormone (oestrogen), that is the result, makes cancers of the breast and the uterus more likely.



Treatment includes using female hormones or removal using surgery.

Commonly asked questions related to polycystic ovary syndrome:

## What is polycystic ovary syndrome, and who gets it?

If your hormones don't work in the normal way, your ovaries might make too many eggs. Those eggs turn into many cysts. The cysts are like little balloons filled with liquid.

Polycystic ovary syndrome is called PCOS for short. Women in their childbearing years can get it. It often begins in the teenage years, and it does not go away.

## What are the signs of PCOS?

Usually, women with PCOS have irregular menstrual periods. After a while, some women stop having any periods. Women with PCOS may have trouble getting pregnant.

(Picture right - Hirsutism in a 17 yr old woman with PCOS)



About 70 percent of women with PCOS have extra hair growing in the sideburn area of their face and on their chin, upper lip, nipple area, chest, lower abdomen and thighs. They may get acne. About half are obese. Some women with PCOS have no signs of it.

## What causes PCOS?

Doctors don't know what causes PCOS. If you have PCOS, you may have a problem with the way your body uses blood sugar (glucose). Because of this problem, the hormones that control your ovaries and menstrual periods can become abnormal.

(Picture right - Ultrasound Image of Polycystic Ovary)



## Does PCOS cause long-term problems?

If you have PCOS, you are more likely to get high blood pressure or diabetes. This means you have a greater risk for strokes and heart attacks.

Because of irregular menstrual periods, women with PCOS are more likely to be infertile (unable to get pregnant). They may also have a higher risk for cancer of the uterus or breast.

(Picture right - Gross and Cut appearance of Polycystic Ovaries)



## How can a doctor tell that I have PCOS?

A doctor will look for the signs of PCOS. Blood tests that measure your hormone levels can help. An ultrasound exam can show if you have cysts on your ovaries.

### **How is PCOS treated?**

If you have PCOS, you might need to lose weight. Medicine can help with your menstrual cycle, abnormal hair growth and acne. If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, they have to be treated. If you want to have a baby, there are medicines that may help you get pregnant.

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