

Understanding PCOS



Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, commonly known as PCOS, is a hormonal disorder that affects 12-18% of reproductive women.

PCOS is a result of hormonal imbalances within the endocrine system. These imbalances cause an excessive production of testosterone while negatively affecting levels of the Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and Luteinising Hormone (LH). This imbalance results in limited egg production, disrupting a woman's menstrual cycle and fertility.

The exact cause is unknown, but there are two possible factors.

- Genetic inheritance (from the mother).
- Disrupted signals from the brain to the ovaries affect hormone production.

How is PCOS diagnosed?

There is no single test to diagnose PCOS. Thus, Dr Kothari will carry out the following exams to determine if you have PCOS.

- **Medical history:** to begin with, Dr Kothari will ask you a few questions regarding your symptoms, any medications you are taking and your overall medical history.

- **Pelvic ultrasound:** to check your reproductive organs for cysts, masses, and other growths.
- **Vaginal ultrasound:** a wand-like device is placed in your vagina to look for follicles on the ovaries and check the thickness of the uterus lining (endometrium).
- **Blood test:** will allow Dr Kothari to measure hormone levels, blood sugar, and other potential causes that may mimic PCOS.

PCOS symptoms

Symptoms will vary from woman to woman, but they are commonly indicated by the following.

- acne,
- weight gain,
- excess hair growth,
- scalp hair loss,
- fertility difficulties,
- irregular periods,
- enlarged ovaries,
- obesity and difficulty losing weight,
- sleep apnoea (brief periods of not breathing whilst asleep),
- fatty liver, which can lead to liver disease,
- Insulin resistance, and
- mental health issues such as anxiety or depression.

Treatment options for PCOS

Lifestyle changes

Creating a management plan is Dr Kothari's preferred approach to treating PCOS. This includes a focus on healthy living, such as a change in diet and physical activity to improve your lifestyle. This approach increases energy levels and helps to build a strong foundation for mental health, thus decreasing anxiety and depression; and increasing motivation and self-confidence.

Some of the lifestyle changes you can implement include:

- Lifestyle changes (no smoking/reduced alcohol intake).
- A healthy diet.
- Regular moderate exercise.
- Plenty of sleep.
- Emotional well-being.
- Improving your quality of life.
- Heavy or irregular menstrual bleeding

Medication

Sometimes you might need a little extra help. Depending on your circumstances and if you wish to become pregnant, Dr Kothari may prescribe the following.

- If you wish to become pregnant: clomiphene citrate or follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) injections for ovulation induction.
- Regulate your periods: contraceptive pills can help reduce male hormone levels and help improve symptoms.

Other medications Dr Kothari may prescribe include:

- Anti-diabetes drugs (Insulin-sensitising, metformin and others)
- Weight loss drugs
- Anti-depressants
- Anti-anxiety drugs

IMPORTANT

- **Medications do not cure PCOS. Symptoms will return if you stop taking medication.**
- **Carefully read the consumer medical information (CMI) leaflet that comes with each medication.**
- **Seek immediate medical assistance if the medication causes any side effects.**
- **Let Dr Kothari know if you are taking alternative medications. As this may affect prescribed treatments.**

Medical treatments

- **Fertility treatment:** If you hope to fall pregnant - Dr Kothari may refer you to a fertility specialist. As an initial step, your doctor will recommend implementing lifestyle changes to help trigger ovulation. If this fails, as mentioned earlier, your doctor will prescribe clomiphene citrate or follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) injections for ovulation induction. Your doctor may also recommend Gonadotropin. However, this will require close monitoring to avoid the development of too many eggs. Alternatively, if ovulation induction is unsuccessful, they may recommend IVF.

Next Steps

More information
Contact our advice team on
02 4225 1999

Diagnosis and treatment
Contact us to book an appointment
with Dr Kothari
02 4225 1999

- **Bariatric (weight loss) surgery:** While bariatric surgery will not cure PCOS, it can assist in restoring your regular menstrual cycle and reducing some of the symptoms. Dr Kothari will only recommend Bariatric surgery if you are unable to lose weight despite several attempts after implementing medically proven diets.
- **Laparoscopic ovarian surgery (LOS):** If you are of childbearing age and are not ovulating, LOS may be an option. While LOS will not treat PCOS, it will assist in inducing ovulation. The aim of LOS is not to treat but to destroy a small position of each ovary by drilling ten holes into each using keyhole (laparoscopic) surgery.

Seeking medical advice and support

For many women, counselling has helped manage the effects of PCOS. If you want more information about counselling, speak to Dr Kothari, and he will discuss the options available and refer you to a professional counsellor. You may also consider PCOS help and support groups and networks, both locally and online.

PCOS support resources:

- www.pcosaa.org
- pcoshealth.com.au

In the meantime, before making any drastic lifestyle changes, we highly recommend you seek medical advice.

Dr Kothari will take the time to listen to and understand your concerns. After careful observation and diagnosis, he will provide you with a tailored treatment to suit your circumstances and will guide you and support you throughout your journey.

Treatment costs

Depending on the level of treatment and care you require, the cost of diagnosis and treatment will vary from patient to patient. The exact structure of the cost and what you can claim on Medicare and private health insurance can be discussed with your doctor before you undergo any form of treatment.

Wollongong Day Surgery
Suite 5, Level 3, 354-358 Crown Street
Wollongong, NSW 2500

PH. 02 4225 1999
wollongongobgy.com.au
admin@wollongongObGy.com.au