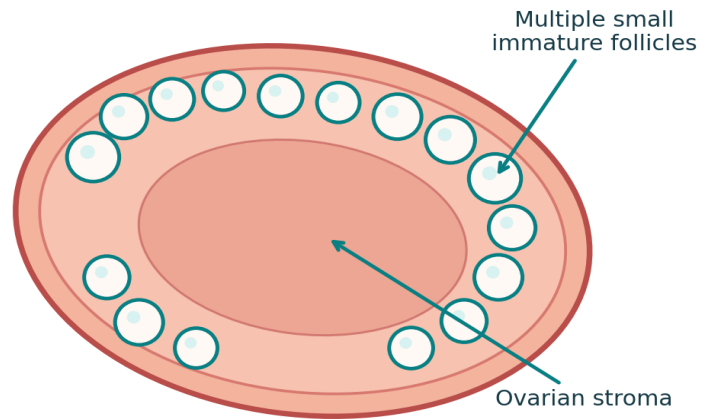
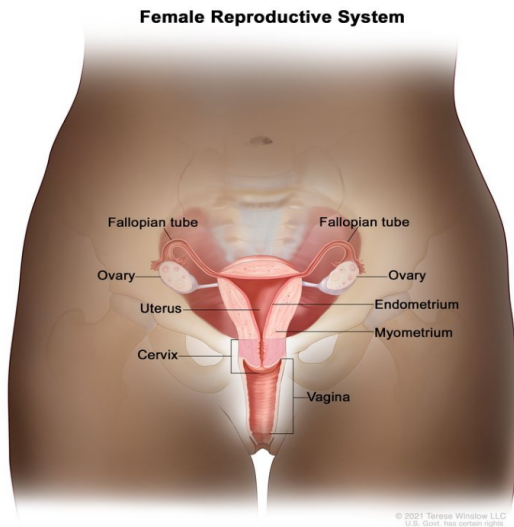


PCOS: Know the Signs. Protect Your Health.

Polycystic ovary syndrome is a long-term hormonal and metabolic condition that may affect ovulation, periods, fertility, skin and hair, blood sugar, and heart-health risks.

Magnified ovary with multiple small follicles

Female reproductive anatomy



This is a magnified medical illustration, not an ultrasound image.
Ovarian appearance alone does not diagnose PCOS.

Anatomy image: Terese Winslow, National Cancer Institute. The NCI illustration identifies the ovaries and the endometrium, the inner lining of the uterus. The magnified ovary detail shows a PCOS-associated pattern of multiple small follicles; not everyone with PCOS has this appearance, and ultrasound findings alone do not diagnose PCOS.

Know the signs

- Irregular, infrequent, heavy, or absent periods
- Trouble ovulating or becoming pregnant
- Increased facial or body hair, acne, oily skin, or thinning scalp hair
- Weight changes or difficulty losing weight
- Dark, thickened, velvety skin patches

How PCOS is identified

There is no single test. Evaluation may include symptom and medical-history review, examination, blood tests, and ultrasound while ruling out other causes.

Why follow-up matters

PCOS is associated with insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular risk factors, sleep apnea, mental-health concerns, endometrial hyperplasia, and endometrial cancer. A risk factor does not mean cancer is certain.

The PCOS-endometrial connection

When ovulation is infrequent, progesterone may not regularly balance estrogen. The endometrium may keep growing without shedding normally. Over time, this may contribute to endometrial hyperplasia; some forms can progress to cancer. PCOS does not automatically become cancer.

Treatment and ongoing care: Care is personalized and may include nutrition and physical-activity support; medicines to regulate cycles or protect the uterine lining; insulin-sensitizing medicine; treatment for acne or excess hair; and fertility treatment. Discuss benefits, risks, and pregnancy goals with a qualified clinician.

Contact a clinician promptly about unusual bleeding. Seek urgent care for very heavy bleeding, fainting, chest pain, shortness of breath, severe weakness, or severe or worsening pain.

Verified sources: CDC, "Diabetes and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)"; NIH/NICHD, "Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)"; NCI/SEER, "Female Reproductive Anatomy"; NCI, "Endometrial Cancer Prevention." Educational use only; not medical advice.