POLYCYSTIC

OVARY

SYNDROME

(PCOS)

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IMPORTANT

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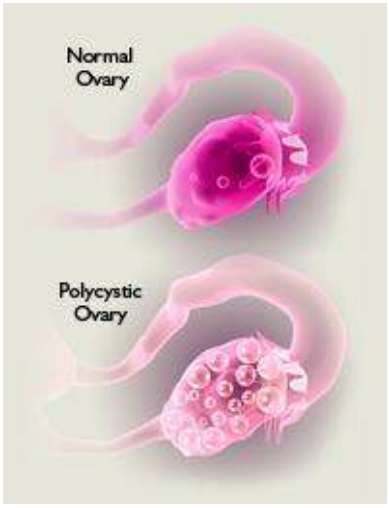
Introduction

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a condition that affects the functioning of the human female ovaries.

In PCOS, the ovaries are generally bigger than average, with many small follicles scattered under the surface of the ovary - usually more than 10 or 15 in each ovary and almost none in the middle. These follicles are all small and immature, and generally do not exceed 10mm in size and rarely, if ever, grow to maturity and ovulate.



Consequently, because the woman rarely ovulates (releases an egg) she is less fertile. Additionally PCOS sufferers do not have regular menstrual cycles and may go for several weeks without a period.

In summary, polycystic ovaries contain a large number of harmless cysts that are no bigger than 10mm each - normal ovaries have only about half this number of cysts. The cysts are under-developed follicles which contain eggs that have not developed properly. Consequently, these follicles are unable to release an egg, meaning ovulation does not take place and the individual is infertile.

Cause

While it's not certain if women are born with this condition, PCOS seems to run in families. This means that something that induces the condition is inheritable, and therefore influenced by one or more genes.

Ongoing research is trying to clarify whether there is a clearly identifiable gene for PCOS. Several different genes have been implicated in the condition; however, none have been definitely implicated as being the prime cause. It is thought that it is the role of several genes, and not one in particular, that may be behind the way the condition is expressed so differently in different people.

Nevertheless, the condition is more likely to develop if there is a family history of diabetes (especially Type 2) or if there is early baldness in the men in the family.

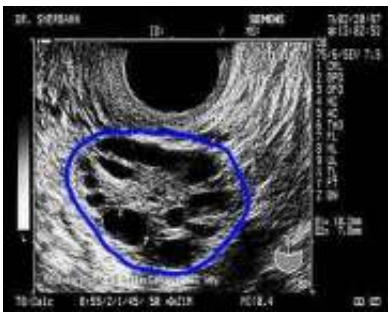
When the genetic tendency for PCOS is passed down through the male side of the family, the men are not infertile; however, they do have the tendency to become bald early in life, e.g. before the age of 30.

A number of marker proteins have also been identified in the blood of women with PCOS, further supporting the view that this is a genetically determined disorder.

Features

There are three typical features which lead to the diagnosis of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome:

1) The development of cysts around the edge of the ovaries (polycystic ovaries)
2) The failure to release eggs from the ovaries (ovulation)
3) A higher level of male hormones than normal; or male hormones that are more active than normal



What polycystic ovaries look like

Symptoms

Symptoms of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Include:

- Acne
- Excessive body hair (hirsutism)
- Hair loss from the head
- Infertility (problems falling pregnant)
- Irregular or light periods
- Weight gain

Risk

Women who are overweight are more at risk of developing PCOS, and many women with PCOS have a family history of diabetes and high cholesterol.

It is also speculated that insulin (a hormone that controls sugar levels in the body) may play a role. Many women with PCOS have too much insulin in their body, which contributes to the increased production and activity of male hormones. Additionally, being overweight increases the amount of insulin that the body produces.

Treating polycystic ovary syndrome

There is no allopathic cure for PCOS.

However, the symptoms can be treated, and allopaths typically prescribe specific types of contraceptive pill to help regulate the menstrual cycle and to improve hair growth. Lifestyle changes, such as losing weight, may also help to control some of the symptoms.

Alternative Treatment

It is claimed that Acupuncture can help with PCOS and on http://www.katewinstanley.com/how-acupuncture-can-help-polycystic-ovarian-syndrome-pcos/ the following information is given:

How can acupuncture help with PCOS?

Acupuncture is believed to stimulate the nervous system and release neurochemical messenger molecules. The resulting biochemical changes influence the body's homeostatic mechanisms, promoting physical and emotional well-being.

Research has shown that acupuncture is an effective treatment for PCOS by:
- Increasing blood flow to the ovaries (Stener-Victorin 2006, 2009)
- Reducing number of ovarian cysts
- Controlling hyperglycaemia and decreasing blood glucose and insulin levels
- Regulating follicle stimulation hormone (FSH), luteinising hormone (LH) and androgens (Lim 2010; Feng 2009)
- Reducing cortisol (the stress hormone) levels (Lim 2010)
- Acting on areas of the brain known to reduce sensitivity to pain and stress, so promoting relaxation and deactivating the 'analytical' brain (Hui 2010; Hui 2009)
- Improve the pregnancy rate in patients with PCOS undergoing IVF (Cui 2011)

If you think you might have PCOS please consider a course of acupuncture.

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