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## PCOD-A problem which affects every third woman

**P**olycystic ovarian disease or syndrome (PCOS) is a common problem which may start in the adolescence and affect the woman till her old age. In this condition the ovary has small cysts arranged in the shape of a necklace within it. This results in an abnormality of the hormones, with the male hormone dominating. As a result, the girls with this syndrome show features such as acne, excessive facial hair growth (hirsutism), weight gain and irregular or scanty menses.

The incidence of PCOS appears to be rising or perhaps it is now being diagnosed more often. It is seen in as many as 25 - 30% of young women. In young girls, the symptoms are mainly cosmetic as they get disturbed by the acne, weight gain and facial hair.

The treatment is usually hormonal and three weeks of treatment every month, for 9 months gives good results.

In married women, the PCOS often manifests as infertility or inability to conceive. In this condition, the ovulation may not occur regularly, and as the egg does not come out each month, the chance of pregnancy is also low.

It can be treated by tablets and injections which cause the patient to ovulate and she may become pregnant. The doctor may often prescribe drugs which are used in diabetic patients, as these drugs are insulin sensitizers and improve the insulin insensitivity, which is the main problem behind PCOS.

In some patients of infertility, in whom a laparoscopy (Keyhole surgery) is being done to check the womb and tubes, a laparoscopic drilling of the cysts can be done.

In this the cysts in the ovary are burnt using a thin needle with an electric current passing through it.

This improves the hormones and may help in achieving a pregnancy. These women in their 30's and 40's are more prone to diabetes and later to cancer of the uterus, if they are not careful and do not take proper medication.

It is important to bring on the periods regularly with medicines if they do not come monthly on their own. This prevents hyperplasia of the lining of the womb & subsequent cancer. A lot of patients with PCOS are obese and one of the main treatments is lifestyle change with exercise, good diet and weight loss. This is the only thing which is effective in the long term. This problem of PCOS can affect women of all age groups, causes different problems at different stages of life & hence should be diagnosed & treated with care.

**Q** I am 19 years old and weigh 77 Kg. I have been struggling to lose weight since 1 year by dieting and exercising, but continuing to increase. Also I have lot of thick hair on my face. I am getting very depressed. Please help ?

Preeti

**A** you have not told me if you have irregular menses also because often these problems go together. There is a strong possibility that you have polycystic ovarian syndrome, which causes weight gain, hirsutism (excessive facial hair) acne and irregular menses. Of course every patient may not have all the symptoms.

This is a common hormonal problem and can be diagnosed by sonography and hormone tests. There are medicines which can help improve your metabolism, reduce facial hair and regularize menses.

Also, keyhole (laparoscopic surgery) can be done to burn the cysts in the ovary which causes this hormonal problem. You need to consult a gynaecologist as this problem also has long term consequences.

For free consultation: email: [askthedoctor@rediffmail.com](mailto:askthedoctor@rediffmail.com)