

Consider Metabolic Complications With PCOS

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) is one of the most common endocrine disorders in women of child-bearing age and is often discovered when women seek medical attention for reproductive difficulties or infertility.

UC Health endocrinologist Marzieh Salehi, MD, cautions that simply addressing immediate fertility issues associated with PCOS isn't enough for long-term health, and she suggests that women with the diagnosis be carefully evaluated for metabolic disorders that may lead to life-long health problems.

PCOS affects nearly 10 percent of the female population and leads to excessive production of androgens ("male" hormones), causing small cysts in the ovaries, irregular menstrual cycles and excessive hair growth in areas that are male-hormone dependent such as the upper lip, chin, chest, upper arm, abdomen and thigh.

Salehi, an assistant professor of endocrinology at UC, says women with this condition often experience problems associated with metabolic syndrome, including [high blood pressure](#), high cholesterol, elevated blood sugar and [insulin resistance](#). Increased abdominal fat is also associated with PCOS.

"Women with PCOS have a higher risk for cardiovascular disease and experience type 2 diabetes at an earlier age and higher rate than women without the condition," says Salehi.

“About two out of three women with PCOS have high triglycerides and LDL cholesterol—the bad kind—and low HDL cholesterol.

“If metabolic symptoms aren’t addressed and treated, there can be long-term cardiovascular consequences and diabetic-related complications.”

Salehi says risks for cardiovascular and metabolic problems can be lowered by lifestyle improvements such as changes in diet and weight loss. Medications targeting insulin resistance can also be used to treat this condition. In some cases involving obese patients, weight-loss surgery has been shown to be effective at reversing metabolic and reproductive problems as well.

For more information on metabolic disease and PCOS, visit netwellness.org, a collaborative health-information Web site staffed by Ohio physicians, nurses and allied health professionals.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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