

Women with hormonal disorder at risk of heart disease

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Photo by Marinka van Holten.

(PhysOrg.com) -- University of Adelaide researchers have found evidence of a link between a common hormonal disorder in women and heart disease - and they're seeking more women to take part in a new study to confirm their results.

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a hormonal disorder affecting about 10% of women of reproductive age and is a leading cause of [infertility](#).

A preliminary study - conducted by researchers with the University of Adelaide's Robinson Institute and the Cardiology Department of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital - has exposed other major health risks and some common misconceptions about PCOS.

The pilot study, involving a small sample of women, showed that:

- Young women (average age of 31 years) with PCOS had significant abnormalities in blood clotting and blood vessel function, which are important risk factors in heart disease;
- This risk was not limited to overweight or obese women with PCOS - it affected women of all body shapes and sizes, including lean women.

"The degree of blood clotting and blood vessel abnormalities seen in women with PCOS in this study was very striking, similar to what we would normally see in older patients with known heart disease," says Dr Alicia Chan, Cardiologist at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and PhD student with the University of Adelaide's Robinson Institute.

"With women now making up almost half of all Australians affected by heart disease, it's very important that we understand the link between PCOS and these heart disease risk factors.

"Importantly, this is the first study to suggest that PCOS is strongly associated with an increased risk of heart disease independent of women's weight or evidence of diabetes. It's a common misconception that only overweight or obese women are affected by PCOS - we need [women](#) to understand that they could still have these [heart disease](#) risk factors regardless of their weight," Dr Chan says.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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