

Large-scale study links PCOS to mental health disorders

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Women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), the most common hormone condition among young women, are prone to mental health disorders, and their children face an increased risk of developing attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), according to a new study published in the Endocrine Society's *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

PCOS affects 7 percent to 10 percent of [women](#) of childbearing age. It costs an estimated \$5.46 billion annually to provide care to reproductive-aged PCOS women in the United States, according to the Society's [Endocrine Facts and Figures report](#). PCOS is the most common cause of infertility in young women, and the elevated male hormone levels associated with the condition lead to many other emotionally distressing symptoms like irregular periods, excessive facial and body hair, weight gain and acne.

"PCOS is one of the most common conditions affecting [young women](#) today, and the effect on mental health is still under appreciated," said one of the study's authors, Aled Rees, M.B.B.Ch., Ph.D., F.R.C.P., of Cardiff University in Cardiff, United Kingdom. "This is one of the largest studies to have examined the adverse mental health and neurodevelopmental outcomes associated with PCOS, and we hope the results will lead to increased awareness, earlier detection and new treatments."

In the retrospective cohort design study, researchers from the

Neuroscience and Mental Health Research Institute at Cardiff University assessed the mental health history of nearly 17,000 women diagnosed with PCOS. The study leveraged data from the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD), a database containing records for 11 million patients collected from 674 primary care practices in the United Kingdom.

When compared with unaffected women, matched for age and body mass index, the study found that PCOS patients were more likely to be diagnosed with mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and eating disorders.

Children born to mothers with PCOS were also found to be at greater risk of developing ADHD and autism spectrum [disorders](#). These findings suggest that women with PCOS should be screened for [mental health disorders](#), to ensure early diagnosis and treatment, and ultimately improve their quality of life.

"Further research is needed to confirm the neurodevelopmental effects of PCOS, and to address whether all or some types of patients with PCOS are exposed to [mental health](#) risks," said Rees.

More information: Thomas R Berni et al, Polycystic ovary syndrome is associated with adverse mental health and neurodevelopmental outcomes, *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* (2018). [DOI: 10.1210/jc.2017-02667](https://doi.org/10.1210/jc.2017-02667)

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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