



POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN  
SYNDROME

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, or PCOS as it is known, is often poorly explained and can be hard to understand. You have been told that you have this condition, so here is a guide to help you navigate it and overcome any issues that it may pose in the future.

## What is PCOS?

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome is very common and is caused by an underlying predisposition to insulin resistance. In simple terms, it means your body is less efficient at managing your blood sugar. This issue alone causes all the symptoms of PCOS and is the reason hormonal changes develop. It is also the key to reversing and managing the condition.

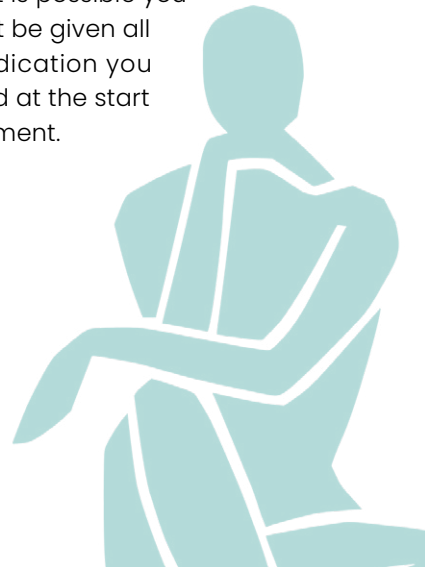
Women with PCOS all experience a totally different set of symptoms and there is large variation in levels of insulin resistance. Some women have issues as a teenager, whilst others have no idea they have this condition until menopause.

*“Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome is very common and is caused by an underlying predisposition to insulin resistance.”*

## How to reverse insulin resistance

**1 Lifestyle** – through diet and exercise. By eating a diet low in carbohydrates, not a no carb diet, and by keeping active and pushing yourself when it comes to exercise. These guides from [Diet Doctor](#) are a useful tool when it comes to deciding which foods to eat.

**2 Medication** – the medication you are given will depend on your situation and the approach your doctor is taking. It is possible you may not be given all the medication you will need at the start of treatment.



## Medication

**Metformin** – This is used to treat PCOS by reducing glucose production in the liver and improving the body's ability to respond to the hormone insulin. Metformin is very effective at treating PCOS alongside a healthy lifestyle. It is usually prescribed in a slow or modified release form as this causes less side effects. You will be started on 500mg once daily and you may be asked by your doctor to increase the dosage.

Most patients taking metformin experience no side effects. For those who do, side effects are most pronounced at the start of their treatment and may include abdominal pain, decreased appetite, B12 deficiency, nausea, altered taste, and vomiting. If you are following a low carbohydrate and low sugar diet it is unlikely that you will experience any of these issues. And we always test for B12 to ensure that levels remain as they should. In very rare cases, some patients can experience skin reactions and hepatitis. Please make your doctor aware if you have any side effects.

**Ozempic** – This medication is an appetite suppressant and can be helpful in reducing insulin resistance. You may have heard about it, as it has been getting lots of media attention recently. Ozempic helps with weight loss and, in doing so, a reduction in insulin resistance. Your doctor will prescribe this if they feel that you will benefit from taking it. If it is prescribed, then you will be asked to have nutritional support for the duration of your treatment. Please be aware that there are availability issues with this medication.

## Balancing Hormones

In PCOS, levels of progesterone are usually very low. This causes many of the difficult symptoms that women with PCOS experience. Progesterone is the body's anti-anxiety and sleep hormone. It protects the womb lining and breast tissue, and low levels cause PMS, mood swings, poor sleep, and anxiety, amongst many other symptoms. Progesterone is given as a capsule, lozenge, or melt.

### **Utrogestan - progesterone capsules**

Most women will be given Utrogestan which is a capsule and should take 1-2 of these (as prescribed) at night, which aids sleep.

If for any reason Utrogestan isn't tolerated, perhaps because you have a soy or peanut allergy, or you need a high dosage of progesterone, alternative capsules will be given. These will be made in PCCA – an MHRA licensed pharmacy.

## Specialist Preparations

These specialist progesterone medications are given as lozenges or under the tongue melts, which dissolve in the mouth and are absorbed through the cheeks directly into the blood stream. You will usually be told to take one quarter of the lozenge in the morning. The aim is to give patients a high enough dose to prevent the effects of low progesterone. As this is different for all women, doses can vary.

## Side Effects

If you notice any breast tenderness or worse PMS as you start to use progesterone, then stop taking it for a few days and restart once the symptoms have settled. If you feel bad or think that you are not reacting well to progesterone, please tell your doctor.

## Trying for a baby

If you are trying to conceive, you will be told to only use progesterone for ten days every month. Using progesterone is safe and taking it during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle (around day 15) is the best way to ensure that the womb lining is ready for conception.

## Androgenic symptoms

Women with PCOS often experience androgenic symptoms, such as excessive hair growth on the face, chest, back, nipples or buttocks, female-pattern hair loss from the head, and acne. This is because, in PCOS, levels of androgen hormones, such as testosterone and Dhea can be high, or have a strong impact on the body. Whilst reversing insulin resistance is the main aim of treatment, we also use medications to help treat androgenic symptoms.

**Spiroinolactone** – This is a potassium sparing diuretic medicine which blocks and protects the androgen receptors in the hair and skin and, in doing so, reverses hair growth or loss and acne. It can take up to six months for benefits to appear.

Most patients taking Spiroinolactone do not experience any side effects, but we test potassium levels after two months, again after six months, and then again after a year as a precaution. The medication can slightly lower blood pressure, so we ask you to check this, and it can cause patients to urinate more, although this is unusual.

We ensure women taking this medication are on contraception as needed as there is a theoretical risk of affecting the foetus, although this has never been shown in humans.

If we don't prescribe Spiroinolactone for any reason, then we can give patients hair tonics to help regrowth and avoid hair loss and skin treatments for acne which can include the contraceptive pill.

**Reversing high insulin levels reverses all the issues associated with PCOS, restoring health and wellbeing, and protecting fertility.**