

# Jennifer Phy, D.O.

## What is PCOS?

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This is the most common hormonal problem. It affects about one in 10 women worldwide, and it's diagnosed by having two of three symptoms. So, women typically have irregular cycles where their cycles are occurring a little bit farther apart than expected. They often have some type of elevated male type hormones, and that might be seen by acne or troublesome hair growth that they don't like or thinning of their scalp hair. And the final feature is the appearance of a polycystic ovary and this is seen by ultrasound, where the egg sacs are little follicles inside the ovary, instead of being distributed through the ovary and of varying sizes. In polycystic ovaries, the follicles are around the edge of the ovary, they form what looks like a little black pearl necklace around the ovary.

## What are the symptoms of PCOS?

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Typically women with PCOS. Note that their cycles are very unpredictable. Instead of being every 28 to 30 days, they're usually late for their cycles, or sometimes they don't get their cycles at all. They'll also usually complain of acne or troublesome hair growth that they don't like sometimes they have coarser darker hair on their chin or face, their abdomen their low back, and many will complain that their scalp hair is getting thinner. So we see a lot of patients in our clinic with polycystic ovary syndrome because they're having difficulty getting pregnant because their periods are irregular, their ovulation is irregular too. And it's one of the most common reasons that we see women who are having fertility issues.

## How does it affect fertility?

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Women with polycystic ovary syndrome do not ovulate very regularly. It's not that they can't, but it's just very unpredictable. So it's frustrating for these women because they might be trying to track ovulation and they just aren't ever sure if they're getting a positive ovulation signal. So the main reason that polycystic ovary syndrome affects fertility is by not ovulating regularly, instead of ovulating around cycle day 14, these women might not ovulate at all or maybe just a few times per year.

## How is it treated?

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Well, typically with PCOS, we try to have overall health improvement. And so that will usually be recommending some type of diet and exercise. But the tricky part with PCOS is that most diets don't work for these women. And for years, I have heard women say, you know, I am starving myself, I am exercising every day. I'm doing everything I'm supposed to. And my body is not responding like everybody else. So we do recommend diet and exercise. But in the past, it has been unsuccessful for most women.

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### How did you find a treatment that worked?

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Well, I trained at the Mayo Clinic, which was just an amazing place to learn. And my focus was on polycystic ovary syndrome there and we learned many things, but we just didn't figure out you know why the metabolism was so unfair for these patients. So in becoming faculty at a medical school, I had the opportunity to work with a dietitian. And she noticed that, that women with PCOS really struggle to process certain foods, even foods that we normally think are healthy, like grains and dairy products. And so she told me that she felt if women would eliminate grains and most dairy products, she really believed it would help them to get pregnant more easily. And so I tried it, I had some patients that were really struggling to get pregnant with traditional fertility treatments. And I encouraged them, you know, let's just try. Let's see what happens by eliminating the grains and dairy. And when they did, they became pregnant when the other treatments hadn't worked. And it was such a surprise, it was just like a miracle. And so we did a study we conducted a research study, and we saw this amazing difference in their health and they lost weight, on average 19 pounds in eight weeks without dieting, like exercising or counting calories or carbs or fats, no medications. Their average weight loss was 19 pounds in eight weeks and it was amazing.

### Why did you want to create an app for PCOS?

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So in the process of publishing that research information, we learned that, that women really want to have that information themselves. Like, it's sometimes very hard to get in to see a fertility specialist or even an OB GYN physician to seek help for this medical condition. And so we wanted to be able to get this information to the woman with PCOS herself right in the palm of her hand, to be able to give her that information that she can use on a daily basis. And know that it is research proven, and it is clinically based. It this diet was created just for women with PCOS. And that's what makes it special.

### Is there anything else we should know about the app?

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We're constantly building in and adding new content so we'll have new recipes and, and new videos that we're adding from other physicians, dermatologists, oncologists, people who can give advice to these women so that they can get a basic understanding of the other health issues that go along with PCOS even if they don't have immediate access to one of those specialists.

### What questions should women ask their physicians?

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If women have irregular cycles, or acne or a little bit of bothersome hair growth, if they're struggling to get pregnant, it is really important to talk to their health care provider about the possibility of PCOS. So although it is so common, and one in 10 women has PCOS it can be a little bit tricky to diagnose and sometimes great health care providers are just finding it a little bit difficult to confidently diagnose PCOS. So I think it's very important to have them talk to their doctor about the symptoms. And you know, be able to see someone that's experienced in diagnosing and treating PCOS.