



Summer Newsletter 2010

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

PCOS is a hormonal disorder that affects between 6 and 10% of women. It causes the ovaries to produce higher than normal amounts of male hormones (also called androgens) and relatively more estrogen than progesterone. Normally, the ovaries produce eggs monthly however with **PCOS** the ovaries produce eggs irregularly and can develop many little sacs filled with liquid called cysts. Instead of being released during ovulation, as an egg would be released, the cysts build up in the ovaries and can become enlarged. **PCOS** may also affect other systems in the body as well.

There are several symptoms of **PCOS** and all do not have to be present in order to make the diagnosis however here is a list of the most common symptoms:

- infrequent periods (oligomenorrhea) ● no periods at all (amenorrhea) ● excessive bleeding during periods (polymenorrhea)
- enlarged ovaries with multiple painless cysts or follicles that form in the ovary ● infertility
- skin tags typically found in the armpits or neck area ● excess body hair (including face) ● thinning hair
- acne ● weight gain and obesity ● increased blood sugar

The cause of **PCOS** is unknown however it does tend to run in families. **PCOS** is diagnosed after several tests have been performed and/or used to rule out other possible conditions.. For instance a doctor will perform a physical examination and take a detailed medical history. He/she will ask about family history as well as your period and its regularity. In addition to this, your weight will be checked and other physical symptoms will be examined i.e. acne, hair growth, etc. Blood tests are also frequently ordered to measure hormone levels. Ultrasound is also used to look at the ovaries and see if cysts are present.

PCOS cannot be cured however there are treatments available that can balance the hormones in the body and relieve some of the symptoms i.e. acne and weight gain. Left untreated however, the hormone changes in the body can increase the risk of the following conditions: infertility, excessive hair growth, diabetes, heart disease, uterine bleeding, increased risk of miscarriage, sleep apnea and uterine cancer. Not all women with **PCOS** will develop any or all of these conditions however it is important to be aware of the possible risks.

Adapted from
Polycystic Ovary Syndrome|Canadian Women's Health Network
www.cwhn.ca/en/node/40805 2007

Websites Worth Checking Out

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada – www.sogc.org

North American Menopause Society – www.nams.org

Women's Health Matters (Women's College Hospital) – www.womenshealthmatters.ca

Canadian Women's Health Network – www.cwhn.ca



Health Quiz

1. The leading cause of death in Canadian women is?

- a) Breast Cancer
- b) Stroke
- c) Lung Cancer
- d) Heart Disease

2. The greatest risk factor for a woman to develop breast cancer is?

- a) Smoking
- b) Estrogen use
- c) Increasing age
- d) Breast density

3. The second greatest risk factor for a woman to develop breast cancer is?

- a) Smoking
- b) Estrogen use
- c) Alcohol use
- d) Breast density

4. How much sodium should we aim for as our maximum daily intake?

- a) 2500 mg
- b) 2200 mg
- c) 2000 mg
- d) 1500 mg

5. What percentage of Canadian women will get HPV (Human papillomavirus)?

- a) 75%
- b) 35%
- c) 50%
- d) 10%

Answers: 1.d 2.c 3.d 4.b 5.a

Topics of Interest

At **Balance for Life Women's Health Centre**, we aim to provide accurate and extensive health education to all of our members. Now we are looking to you for your input. Please indicate which topic(s) you would like featured at a future "talk" that would be presented right here in our office. We look forward to hearing from you!

- ❖ Osteoporosis
- ❖ Hair Loss in Women
- ❖ Fibrocystic Breast Disease
- ❖ Hormones for Menopause
- ❖ Stress and its Effects on Health
- ❖ Nutrition/Healthy Eating
- ❖ Endometriosis
- ❖ What to do about Mood Swings?

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