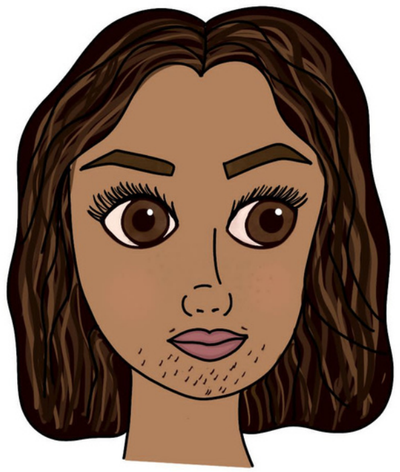
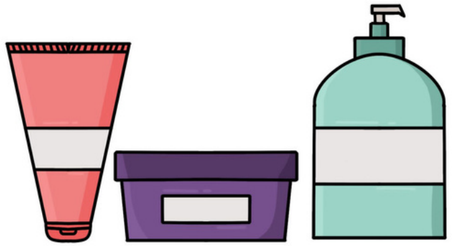
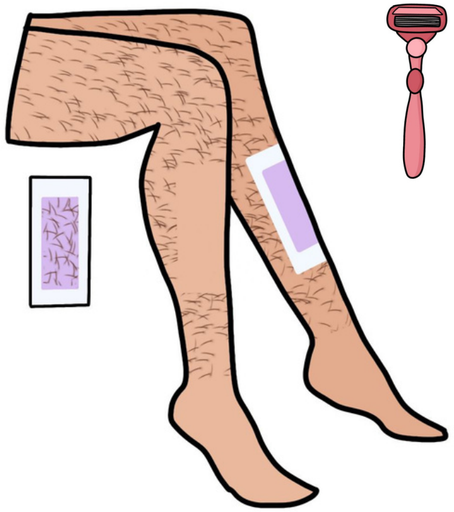
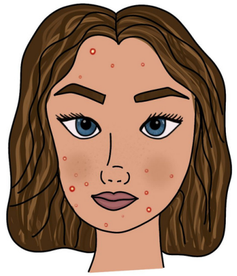
PCOS

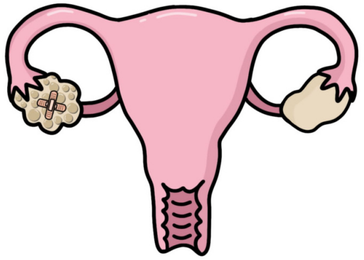
Polycystic Ovary Syndrome in Young Adults

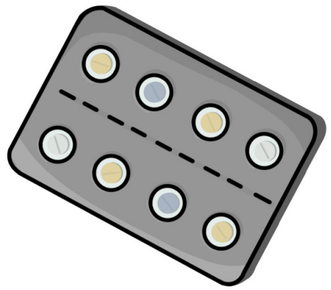


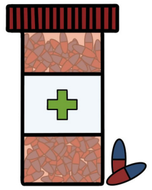












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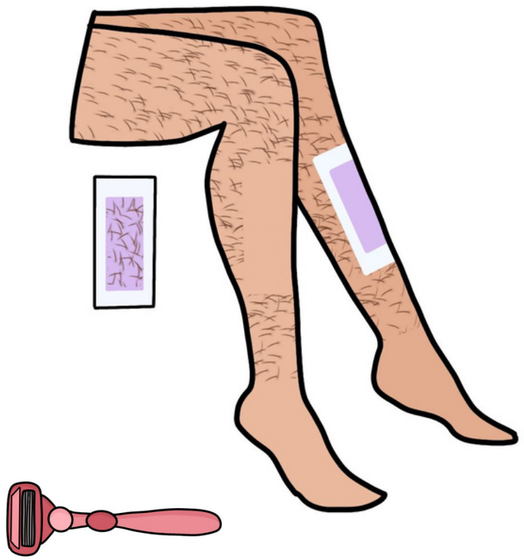
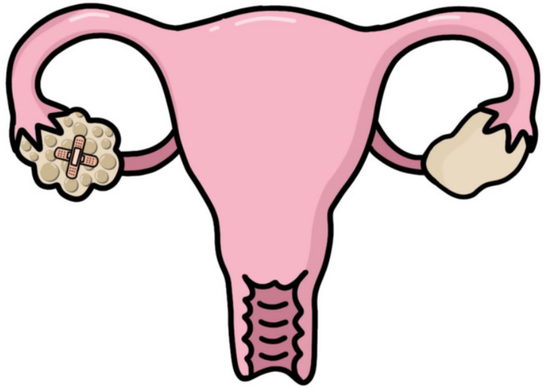
What is PCOS?

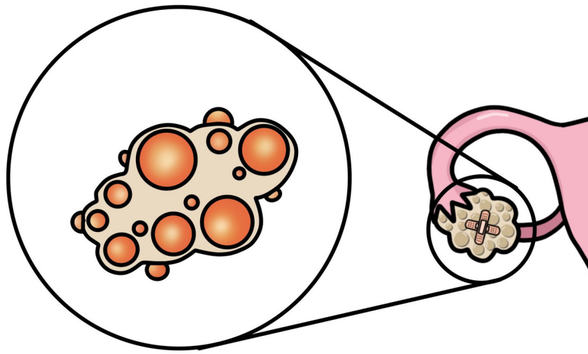
PCOS stands for polycystic ovary syndrome, although its name can cause confusion as it is more than just having cysts on your ovaries.

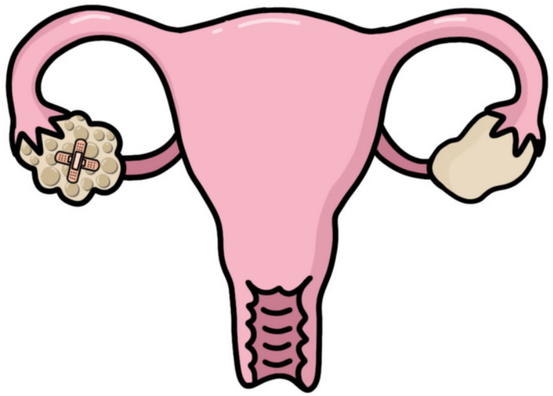


PCOS includes a wide range of symptoms meaning it can effect people in very different ways.

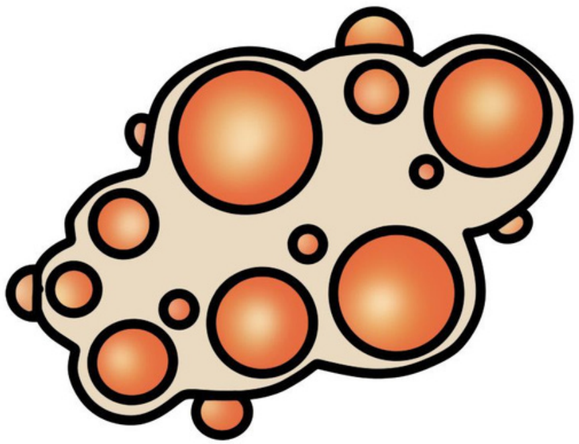


One teenager with PCOS may have very few symptoms whereas another may have many.





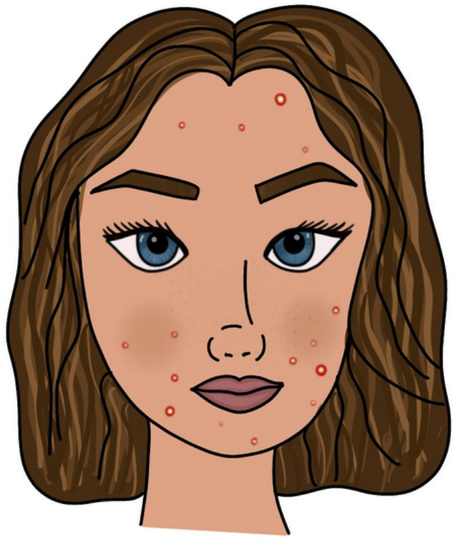
As many as 20 in 100 young women could have PCOS. With many of these having mothers or other family members who have it.



Previously scans of the ovaries were performed to count the cysts but making a diagnosis from just a scan is no longer recommended because it is common to see lots of little cysts developing on the ovaries around puberty

Symptoms include

- Irregular periods
- No periods
- Heavy periods
- Bad acne
- Excess facial/body hair
- Thinning hair



Diagnosis

The most useful way to diagnose PCOS is with a hormone blood test showing higher levels of hormones such as testosterone but there is a lot of variation which make these levels difficult to read.

Some symptoms such as irregular periods and acne are common in teenagers which also makes the diagnosis difficult

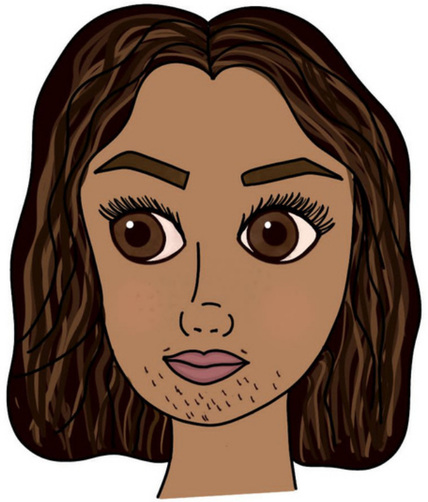
Your doctor may say that you are 'at risk of PCOS' which means that it's too difficult to yet know if you definitely do have PCOS or not.

Why does having PCOS matter?

The symptoms you may experience can be upsetting, worrying and troublesome.

If you are feeling low or depressed about your symptoms please talk to your GP

Having PCOS can increase your risk of developing health problems in the future including heart disease and type 2 diabetes, where the body can no longer process sugar effectively.

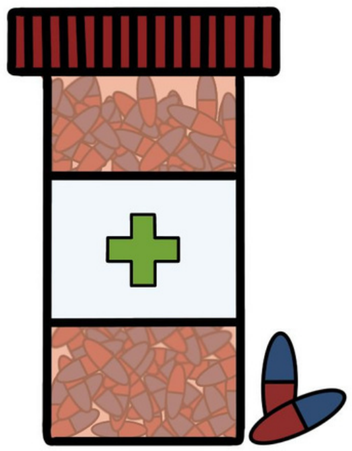


Having less than 3 periods a year can increase the thickness of the lining of your womb which may cause problems in the future.

Tablets your doctor could prescribe

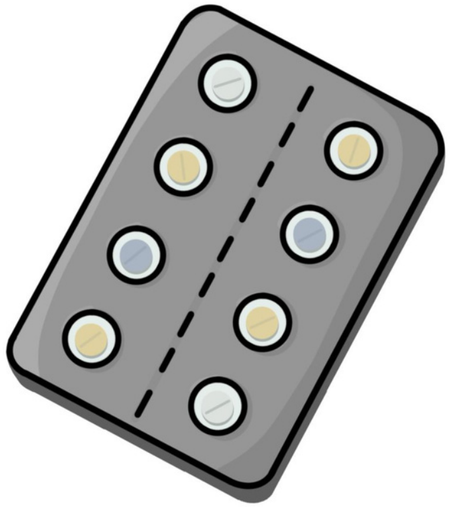
Metformin

May be considered if you are struggling to lose enough weight to improve your symptoms, although any weight you lose is great. This tablet can have some side effects though so be sure to discuss this with your doctor first.



Weight Loss Tablets

Tablets to help you lose weight are not recommended and can be very dangerous to your heath so please speak to your GP about your other options and don't try buying weight-loss products online.



Combined Contraceptive Pill

Can help to lower the level of testosterone in your body, may help to regulate your periods and improve your skin, but this may not always be an option for you if you have a high BMI or high blood pressure.

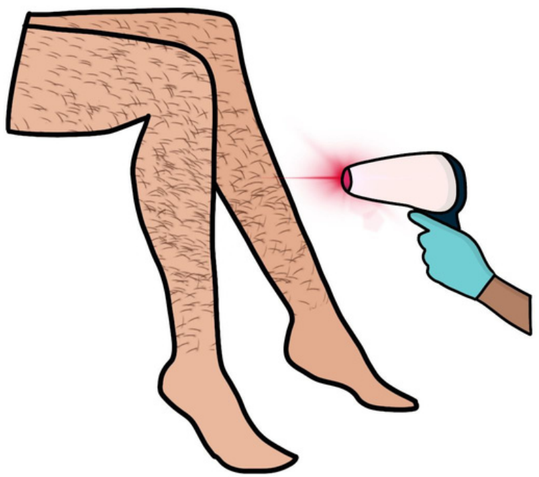
Additional Medication

Topical Treatment to help with Acne

Speak to your GP about which treatment are available to you

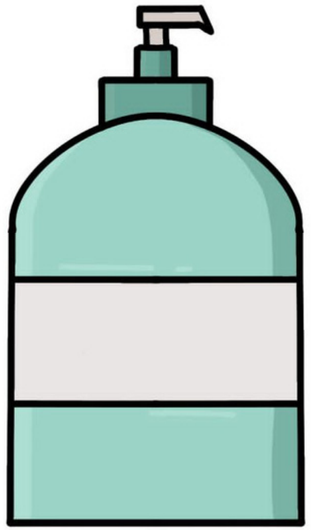
They may suggest

- Epiduo Gel (retinoid) Side effect: dry skin & redness
- Duac gel



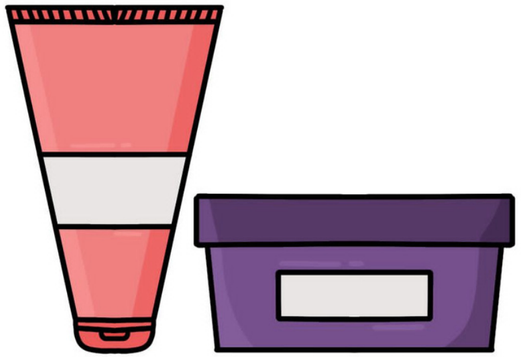
Treatments to help with facial hair

- Vaniqua with aqua
- Laser treatment



Medication to help with Acne

- Lymecycline (must be >12yrs)
- Roaccutane (Can only be prescribed by a dermatology specialist)



What you can do to improve your symptoms?

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and diet is one of the first and most important treatments for PCOS.

Reducing your body weight if you are overweight can reduce your risk of developing things such as diabetes and heart problems in the future.
Aim for 60 mins of moderate to vigorous intensity physcial activity per day

If you are struggling then speak to your GP or health care team who may be able to refer you to someone who can help you change your diet.

Try setting yourself achievable goals, eating slower, thinking more about what you are eating and why.

Other sources of information and support:

Information on PCOS are available from:

- https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/patient-leaflets/polycystic-ovary-syndrome-pcos-what-it-means-for-your-long-term-health/
- https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/polycystic-ovary-syndrome-pcos/
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSulKtGEQWo

Support groups for people with PCOS include:

- PCOS Challenge: The National Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Association (www.pcoschallenge.org).
- Verity (www.verity-pcos.org.uk).

Illustrations by Miss Katie Stock

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