

PCOS SUCCESS:

PCOS 'BASICS' YOU SHOULD KNOW...

What IS PCOS?

PCOS is a **complex endocrine (hormone) & metabolic condition** which is characterised by an imbalance between our male & female hormones. Women with PCOS often have chronically **low levels of progesterone** due to **anovulation** (no ovulation) or **poor egg quality** due to factors such as inflammation & insulin resistance. For this reason, PCOS is the **leading cause of infertility** in women of reproductive age.

How is it tested?

To be diagnosed with PCOS, you need to meet **2 out of the following 3 criteria...**

- 1) The appearance of 'polycystic ovaries' on an ultrasound**
- 2) Signs of elevated androgens on blood work or symptoms**
- 3) Irregular or absent ovulation**

Common root causes/drivers?

Every women with PCOS has chronic **inflammation** & around 80% have some degree of **insulin resistance**. High **stress** is also a common driver, as androgens can be produced from the adrenal glands when cortisol & adrenaline (stress hormones) are released. Plus cortisol can worsen both insulin resistance & inflammation.

'What's the conventional treatment approach?

Hormonal birth control to 'regulate' the menstrual cycle & improve symptoms such as acne/hair loss, metformin to support insulin resistance, spironolactone to reduce androgen production & topical creams or Roaccutane for acne. These options do come with many side effects & in some cases, they may actually worsen the underlying imbalances of PCOS.

Benefits' of PCOS:

Evolutionarily, women with PCOS would have survived times of famine (due to tendencies towards insulin resistance). Plus we typically gain muscle really well & many elite female athletes have PCOS due to their increased strength & tolerance to exercise. Also due to the natural decline in hormones with ageing & the reduced number of ovulatory cycles, women with PCOS tend to have higher rates of successful pregnancies over the age of 35, whereas women without tend to have less success over this age.

Long term risks:

If hormones are left imbalanced, there is an increased risk of the following conditions developing...

- > **Type 2 diabetes**
- > **Metabolic syndrome**
- > **Cardiovascular disease**
- > **Obesity**
- > **Infertility**
- > **Alzheimer's/dementia**
- > **Cancer - ovarian, uterine**
- > **Depression/anxiety**