



PCOS and Menopause: What You Need to Know

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As people with ovaries age, the body and hormones change. If you have polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), you may wonder how this affects menopause. Here's what we know:

How PCOS Changes with Age

- Cycles often become more regular toward the end of reproductive years.
- Ovaries get smaller, and the number of follicles goes down.
- Symptoms of high androgens (like acne or excess hair) often improve starting in your 30s.
- Even after menopause, androgen levels may stay a little higher in people with PCOS compared to others.

Understanding the Menopause Transition

- Perimenopause starts when your cycles change (more than 7 days off your usual pattern). Once you've gone 12 months without a period, you're officially in menopause.
- For people with PCOS, this can be confusing, since irregular cycles often started much earlier in life.

Health Considerations

- People with PCOS may be at higher risk for heavy or irregular bleeding in perimenopause. If bleeding is prolonged (longer than 7 days) or heavy (using more than 6-8 menstrual products per day or frequently passing clots larger than a quarter, or bleeding resulting in anemia/low blood count), you should be evaluated by a gynecologist.
- Weight gain and muscle loss are common for everyone during midlife. Because PCOS raises the risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, healthy habits become especially important.
- People with PCOS are at especially higher risk for diabetes and impaired glucose tolerance (sometimes known as prediabetes) during perimenopause and should be screened yearly.

Symptom Care and Treatment

- There are a variety of treatments available for bothersome menopause symptoms (like hot flashes, sleep problems, mood changes).
- Menopause hormone therapy (MHT) is safe for most people. It may carry small risks (like blood clots or breast cancer with certain types), but it also lowers risks of bone loss, diabetes, and early death for many people under age 60.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Have your PCOS symptoms changed as you've gotten older?
- Are your menopause symptoms different from friends or family without PCOS?
- What helps you feel your best during this stage?