PCOS

(Polycycstic Ovarian Syndrome)

What is PCOS?

PCOS is a common condition affecting many women in their **reproductive years**. It is usually associated with **irregular periods** and **difficulties in conceiving** due to lack of ovulation. This results in **no egg/oocyte release** every month.

Obesity

Insulin resistance, which results in higher risks of developing diabetes.

What are the health risks of PCOS?

Endometrial Cancer (cancer of the uterus)

Given the implications of PCOS to a woman's fertility and health, it is important to have an accurate diagnosis of this condition.

Diagnosis of PCOS may vary depending on ethnicity.
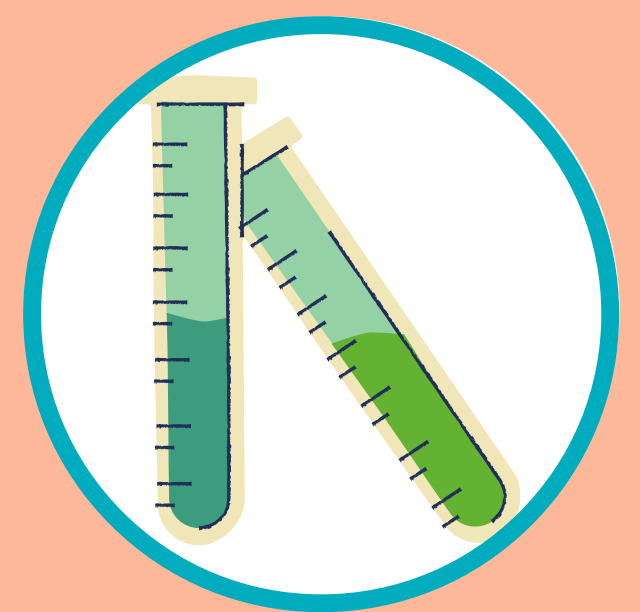
Common diagnostic markers of PCOS include:

Higher than average number of follicles and/or volume of ovary

As such, the ovaries may fail to function regularly.

Irregular periods

For example, you may experience fewer than 9 periods a year, more than 35 days between periods or abnormally heavy periods.

Androgen excess

Current findings

There are clear differences in **hirsutism rates** (increased hair growth) between East Asian and Caucasian women.

There is a **lack of data** to confirm the ethnic differences in **androgen levels and polycystic ovarian morphology** (higher than average number of follicles and volume of ovary) in Asian and Caucasian women with PCOS.

The simplified PCOS criteria
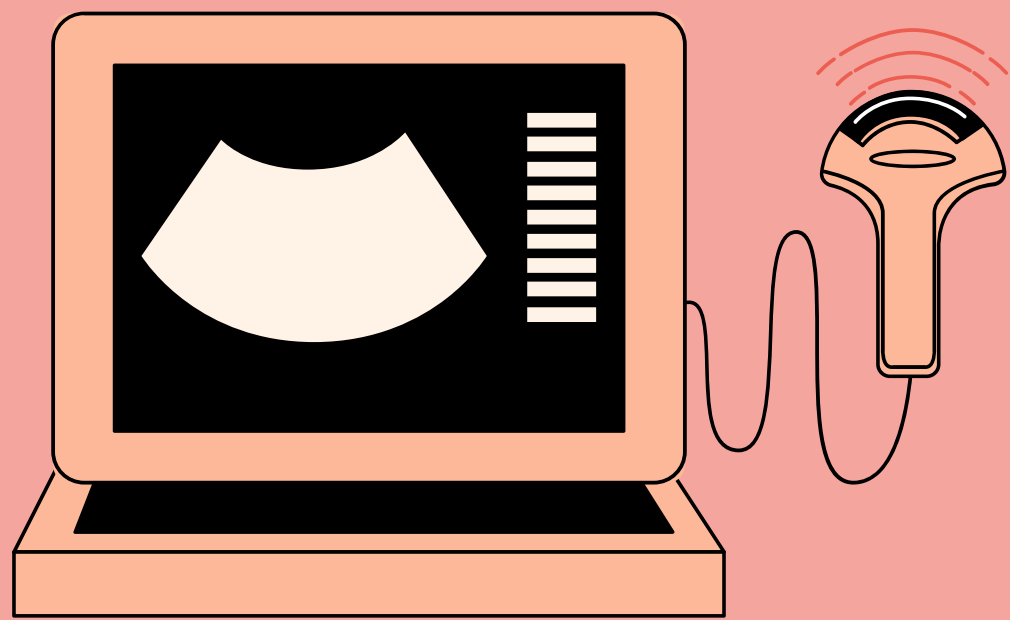
For the diagnosis of PCOS, specific population thresholds is recommended over ovarian ultrasound biometry, which **does not take into account ethnical differences**.

The simplified PCOS criteria uses **testosterone** as a single marker of **high male hormone levels** (hyperandrogenaemia), together with key symptoms of **irregular periods** (oligomenorrhoea) and **increased growth of hair** (hirsutism) for diagnosis.

More research is needed to understand the link between **ovulation** (production of eggs in the ovary), **ovarian follicular biology** (production of eggs by ovarian follicles monthly) and **hormonal abnormalities.**

Source: Simplified 4-item criteria for polycystic ovarian syndrome: A bridge too far? (Indran, Huang et al, 2018).