Let’s Talk About PCOS

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome
What it is, and what your doctor can do.

ACUPUNCTURE
An ancient treatment offers new comfort and hope.

SART RESULTS
The Center continues to demonstrate success. 13,000 babies can attest!

FACEBOOK LIVE!
Our new "Lunchtime Live With The Center" is becoming a huge success.

OUR VIDEO LIBRARY
From physician Q&A’s and patient testimonials, to debunking myths and more.
Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

It’s a fairly common syndrome. In fact, 5-10% of women have it. And, it can contribute to infertility. But here’s the thing … not everyone has the same symptoms. So, to determine whether you have Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (or PCOS), your doctor has to follow the clues to look for a combination of problems.

YOU NEED TWO OF THE THREE

To be diagnosed with PCOS, you need to exhibit two of the following three symptoms:

1) A chronic lack of ovulation (anovulation)
2) A chronically high level of the hormone testosterone (hyperandrogenism)
3) Multiple small cysts on your ovaries (polycystic)

So, how can your doctor determine whether you have PCOS?

UNCOVERING DIFFERENT CONDITIONS REQUIRES DIFFERENT METHODS

To determine whether you have “two of the three,” your doctor will need to do a variety of things. First, you’ll need to have a physical exam and go over your menstrual history with your doctor. You’ll also need to have a transvaginal ultrasound. And, you’ll need to have some blood work done. These three diagnostic methods will help determine whether you have the conditions that add up to PCOS.

Even though not everyone has the same symptoms, there are some commonalities among women who are diagnosed with PCOS. For example, women with PCOS typically report having irregular menstrual periods. They may skip a period, or go a long time between periods. Other common signs include being obese, having increased hair growth, or having problems with excessive acne.

Ultrasounds typically reveal that women with PCOS have enlarged ovaries with a number of small cysts. High levels of blood sugar, cholesterol and testosterone (the “male hormone”) are also commonly found in the blood tests of women with PCOS.

ARE THERE RISKS TO HAVING PCOS?

Absolutely. Besides making it difficult to get pregnant, there are health risks associated with irregular ovulation. Studies reveal that over 50% of women with PCOS will develop diabetes (or pre-diabetes) before they’re 40. Women with PCOS are at greater risk for developing high blood pressure, having increased levels of “bad” cholesterol (LDL) and lower levels of “good” cholesterol (HDL), as well as having a heart attack. Women with PCOS are also at risk for sleep apnea, anxiety and depression.

The hormonal irregularities associated with PCOS can also put patients at increased risk for developing endometrial cancer (the endometrium is the lining of the womb). When menstruation and ovulation are irregular, women still produce the hormone estrogen. But, they do not produce progesterone, the hormone that causes the endometrium to “shed” each month creating a woman’s period. Without progesterone, over time the lining of the womb can become too thick, causing heavy or irregular bleeding. If the lining grows too much, the patient can develop endometrial hyperplasia, or eventually, cancer.

If you’re diagnosed with PCOS, talk with your doctor about steps you can take to reduce your chances of developing long-term health problems. For example: If you eat right, exercise more, reduce your weight and quit smoking, you can give your body a better chance of developing a more regular ovulation pattern.

CAN YOU BE TREATED FOR INFERTILITY IF YOU HAVE PCOS?

You can. In fact, our physicians will offer you a variety of treatments that will maximize your chances of getting pregnant. In addition to the lifestyle changes mentioned above, our specialists might recommend oral medications that induce ovulation, or fertility medicines that are taken by injection. In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) may be the best option for you. Whatever form your treatment takes, you can be assured that we will “follow the clues,” work with you, explore all the options, monitor you carefully, and give you the best chance of realizing your dream.
Acupuncture can be a prickly topic. Pictures of the procedure can make it look scary, it looks like it could be painful (though it's not!) and some simply shrug it off as one of those “New Age trends.” However, there are many studies that show this ancient Eastern medical procedure can assist in the treatment of many ailments, including infertility.

Acupuncture, one of the 8 branches of ancient Chinese medicine, involves the strategic (and painless!) placement of tiny needles to certain key “energy points” in the body. These points are believed to regulate spiritual, mental, emotional and physical balance. In a text dating from around 300 BCE, acupuncture was described as:

- Treating the root cause of an illness (or imbalance) by addressing the whole body
- Supporting the innate power of the body to heal, self-regulate and achieve homeostasis
- Removing blockages in the body's energy system, which cause pain and disease
- Improving egg quality
- Regulating menstrual cycles
- Regulating hormone levels
- Calming the nervous system and reducing stress
- Increasing the chances of embryo implantation (when done on the day of transfer)
- Improving pregnancy rates in IVF

Is acupuncture right for you?

The best way to decide if acupuncture is right for you is to talk with your physician and our acupuncturist. As noted, we'll do an extensive review of your (and your partner's) health, lifestyle, stress levels and more before any treatment is recommended. As always, our goal is to give you the greatest chance possible to achieve your dream of bringing a healthy baby into the world.

How does it work?

The basis of acupuncture is that it helps activate the flow of your Qi (or vital energy), as well as blood circulation. This flow can be interrupted (or blocked) by stress, overwork, emotion, poor diet, trauma, and other factors. Recent studies show that, in addition to increased blood flow, acupuncture also helps support the immune system, causes the release of endorphins (natural pain blockers) and helps regulate key hormones.

Treatment doesn’t just involve using needles. Practitioners also offer dietary guidance, herbal supplements, and suggestions for daily lifestyle changes. Your treatment program will be based on an intensive look at your particular situation. The idea is that the health of the unborn child is dictated by the health of the man (sperm) and the woman (egg) at the time of conception.

How does acupuncture enhance fertility?

For many women, having acupuncture both before and after embryo transfer has been shown to help with their fertility in many ways. It's not just for women, either. The fertility of men can also be enhanced. Acupuncture can support fertility by:

- Preparing the body for natural conception
- Improving sperm motility, quantity and quality
- Improving and increasing blood flow to the uterine artery
- Increasing the chances of embryo implantation (when done on the day of transfer)
- Improving pregnancy rates in IVF

The experiences that really stand out for me are those times when I provide acupuncture treatment to my patients on the day of their embryo transfer … both pre- and post-transfer … and I can watch them fall into a state of deep calm. That's both rewarding for me and beneficial to the success of their treatment.”
Choosing a quality Center is paramount to having successful outcomes. Not all Centers provide the same infertility treatments, offer the same approach or have the same results. Important criteria used to evaluate a Center’s success include:

- **Experience level**
- **Live birth rate**
- **Triplets or more**
- **Cumulative Outcome Per Egg Retrieval**

We believe that the Center continues to demonstrate success: Not only in the percent of live births achieved, but also in our ability to ensure the potential for pregnancy with twins, triplets or more. With over 13,000 babies born since our inception, we continue to lead in both the region and the nation.

To learn more about our success rates and those of other nations, visit the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technologies website (www. SART.org). Click on IVF Success.

A comparison of clinic success characteristics and treatment rates may not be meaningful because patient medical characteristics and treatment approaches may vary from clinic to clinic.

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**AN IVF LAB CAN BE CRITICAL TO YOUR SUCCESS**

Embryos are highly sensitive to temperature changes, contaminants and more. That’s why we’ve created a pristine lab environment that mimics the natural uterine environment as closely as possible.

Any fertility clinic can claim it has a great lab. But, if you really want to know whether we’re right for you, take a look at our success rates. Over more than 35 years of practice, we’ve been responsible for the births of over 13,000 babies. We’re one of the most successful in the nation. With exceptional care and the right environment that mimics the natural uterine environment, we’ll provide you with the greatest chance possible of bringing a healthy new baby into the world.

**LUNCHTIME Live! with the Center**

Tune in each Wednesday at 12:30 for a Facebook Live chat about all things fertility. Interested in learning more about PGD? Have questions on the latest genetic testing options? Or maybe you’ve wanted to try acupuncture but aren’t sure about when is the right time during treatment to go. Like us on Facebook and check out our list of upcoming conversations.

**UPCOMING LUNCHTIME LIVE TOPICS**

- **When do I need to see a specialist?**
- **New patient visits**
- **Fertility massage**
- **LGBTQ care at the center**
- **Egg Freezing**
- **Fertility Surgery**
- **Diagnostic Testing**
- **PCT**
- **Blastocyst vs. DAY 3**
- **Coping**
- **Financial Counseling**

Can’t make a session? You can always view the conversation afterwards on our YouTube channel or in our website Video Library.

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OUR STORY: The Center is an academic affiliate of the UConn School of Medicine. We are a specialized program of the division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Fertility and one of the largest and most successful IVF programs in the Northeast. We offer one of less than 40 postgraduate fellowships for Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility (REI) in the United States. Due to our national reputation as a “Center of Excellence,” acceptance to one of our fellowship positions is very competitive. Fellows also participate in ongoing clinical research. This has resulted in several first author publications and national conference presentations for our fellows. Over the past three years, the fellows have presented 18 abstracts at national meetings and have published 13 articles in peer reviewed journals. Plus, we not only have REI fellows, but also Ob/Gyn residents and medical students training here as well.

You may not be able to bury your hardest times, forgetting that they happened, or change them down the line, but because those times were hard, they’ll endure the moments when you realize you are strong enough to stand on top of them.

So wear your strongest posture now, and see your hardest times as more than just the times you fell but a range of mountains you learned to climb.

by Morgan Harper Nichols

A wonderful poem thanks to our yoga and fertility massage therapist, Carissa Spada, LMT.

Start your fertility treatment at home

Now you can get your fertility care started from home with a Virtual Fertility Visit. All of our physicians are maintaining full schedules and can meet with clients "virtually" either by phone or video conferencing, eliminating any social distancing concerns. We’ve found many patients more comfortable starting off in this manner. It even allows for partners to dial in from different locations if necessary and offers more flexibility when scheduling the initial appointment. Get more information on our website under “Make an Appointment.” We look forward to “meeting you!”