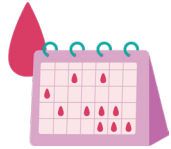


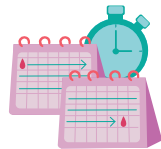
How Do I Manage My Irregular Periods with PCOS?



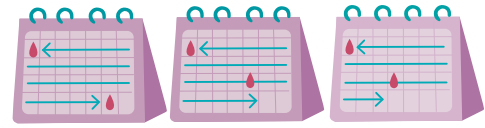
Most people with PCOS have irregular periods. Periods are “irregular” if:



They come **too** often
(less than 21 days between)



They don't come often **enough**
(more than 35 days between)



The number of days between your periods is **more than 7 days** different
(shorter or longer)

You may also have periods that are:



Too **heavy**

Bleeding lasts more than 7 days or you go through one or more pad/tampon per hour for more than two hours in a row.



Too **painful**, such as really bad cramps

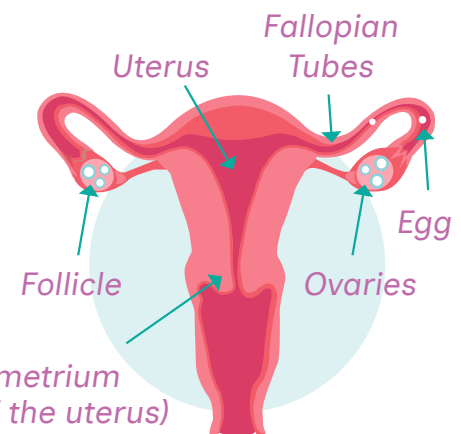
Talk to your healthcare provider if your periods are irregular or you have heavy bleeding or pain that gets in the way of your life.

Want to learn more about the phases of your cycle? Check out this resource:



Why are my periods irregular?

People with PCOS have more androgen hormones (such as testosterone) in their bodies. They are also more likely to be insulin resistant and have higher insulin levels. Androgens and insulin both affect your ovaries and ovulation. Ovulation is when one of your ovaries releases an egg. With PCOS, your ovaries might not release an egg every cycle. They could also release an egg at a different time in each of your cycles. Irregular ovulation leads to irregular periods and heavy periods.



Why should I care if my periods are irregular?

Regular bleeding helps keep the lining of your uterus healthy. For some people with PCOS, this lining gets too thick if periods don't happen often enough. This can increase your risk for certain types of cancers and precancers in your uterus. You need to have at least 4 normal periods per year to reduce this risk. Having periods that are easier to predict can also improve your quality of life.



What if I am on hormonal birth control?

Hormonal birth control affects your cycle. You may see differences in your bleeding depending on the kind you are on. All hormonal birth control protects the lining of your uterus, reducing your risk of cancers and precancers.

If you are on hormonal birth control and you are bleeding between periods or bleeding less than 21 days apart, talk to your provider.

I have irregular periods. What can I do?

Eating well and exercising more can help. Other options depend on your goals.

Lifestyle recommendations for everyone:



Eat a well-balanced diet to fuel your body.

Include healthy fats (fish, olive oil, nuts), vegetables, fruits and whole-grains (brown rice, whole wheat, quinoa)



Try new ways to manage and reduce stress.



Ask your doctor about metformin or other medications that can help lower insulin levels & reverse insulin resistance.



Try taking a supplement called myo-inositol.

It can also help reverse insulin resistance and lower insulin levels.



Find ways to move your body that feel good and fun.

Building muscle can help reverse insulin resistance!

I want to become pregnant soon.

- Hormonal birth control is not a good choice for you because it stops you from getting pregnant.
- Cyclic progestins can trigger bleeding to protect the lining of the uterus. These do not prevent pregnancy.
- For more information on getting pregnant with PCOS, visit <https://go.unc.edu/PCOS-Fertility-ENG>

I want my period to be lighter, less frequent or not come at all.

- Hormonal IUDs or shots (like Depo Provera) can reduce the number of periods you have.
- Hormonal implants, like Nexplanon, may help you have lighter periods but you may have more days of bleeding each period.
- If you have break-through bleeding, contact your provider to see if a better option works.

I want my period to be more regular and predictable.

- Combined oral contraception (COC) are birth control pills that contain the hormones estrogen and progesterin that can help your period be more regular.
- Progestin-only birth control pills are another option, but bleeding between periods (“break-through bleeding”) is more common than with a COC.



Some people don't like the idea of taking hormones. If that's you, your best options are to do things that can help reverse insulin resistance and lower the androgens in your body. You can also ask your healthcare provider about cyclic progesterone. It is a hormone, but it is the same as what naturally occurs in your body. Cyclic progesterone does not change the levels of other hormones in your body.



All bodies are different! Your healthcare provider will work with you to meet your goals. Don't feel discouraged if the first thing you try doesn't work.



For more information about PCOS and how this sheet was created, visit:

www.showyourlovetoday.com/navigate-pcos/