How PCOS Affects Your Body

PCOS affects many body systems, not just the reproductive system.

What is PCOS?
Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a condition where an imbalance in hormones causes many changes in the body. The exact cause of PCOS is unknown. About 1 in 10 people assigned female at birth have PCOS.

Symptoms vary, but usually include:
- Inconsistent or missed periods
- Abnormal hair growth
- Weight gain, especially in belly
- Abdominal pain
- Hair loss or thinning hair
- Acne
- Trouble getting pregnant
- Pregnancy complications

PCOS and other health conditions
Instability in hormones and weight gain caused by PCOS can lead to other health complications, including:
- Mission-readiness and PCOS
- Fatty liver disease
- Mood disorders (anxiety/depression)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease

Mission-readiness and PCOS
PCOS puts you at risk for health conditions that can affect military height/weight standards and mission-readiness.

FACTS:
- Stress can affect mental health and overall well-being
- Pelvic pain can interfere with performance
- Unusual periods and heavy bleeding can soil uniforms
- Insulin resistance and abdominal weight gain - Can make it hard to meet standards for weight, interfering with promotions, reenlistment or professional development opportunities

Can people with PCOS stay in the military?
There are currently no relaxed weight standards for women diagnosed with PCOS. But a diagnosis is not an automatic discharge from the military. You may need a waiver for medication to balance hormones, but you can continue your career and be mobilized or deployed.

Talk to your medical provider for advice about continuing your job after a PCOS diagnosis.