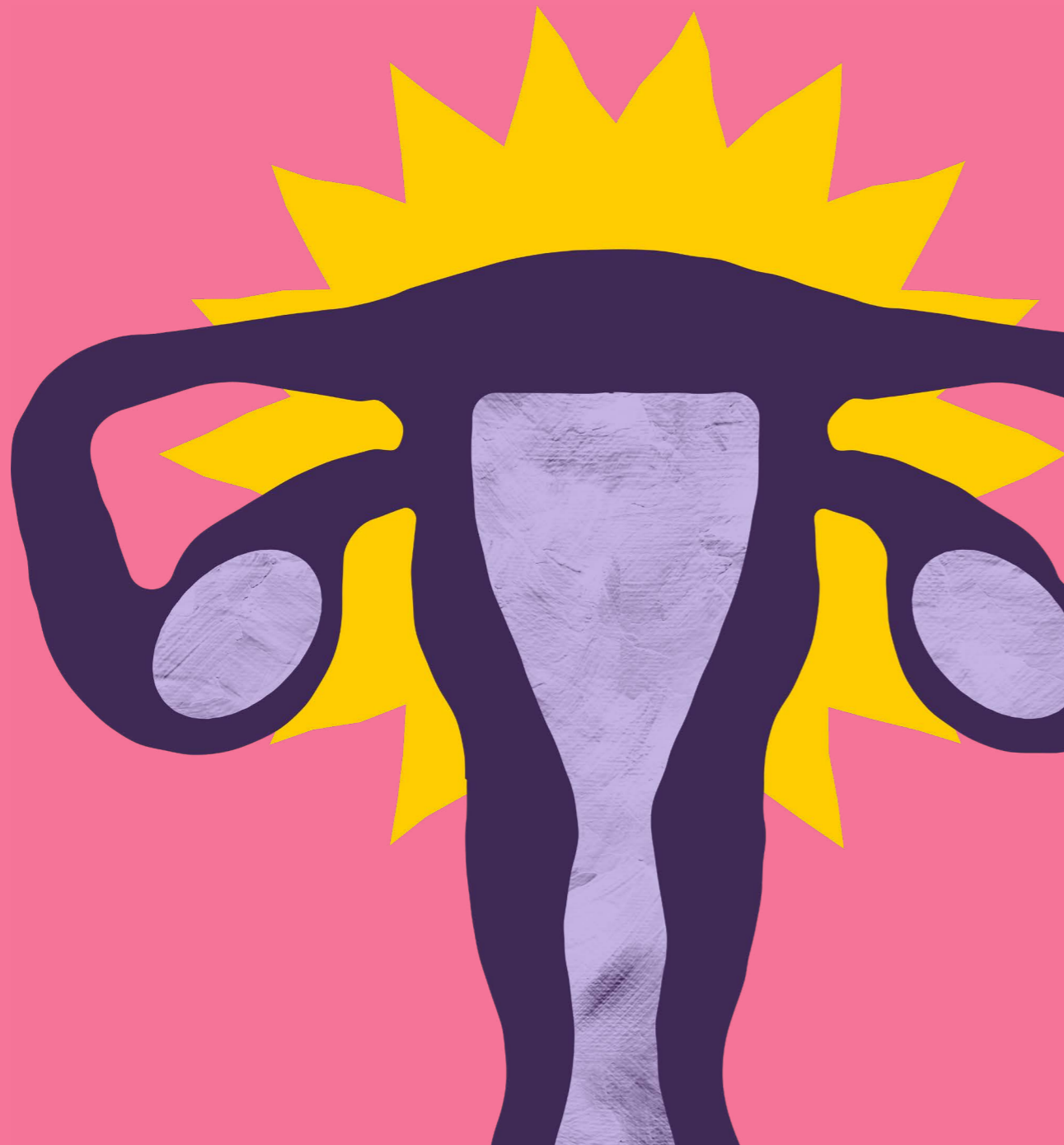


Everything you should know about PCOS



A guide written by Peppy's senior fertility and women's health practitioner Anne Howard, who suffers from polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)



What businesses need to know about PCOS

What is PCOS?

PCOS, or Polycystic Ovary Syndrome, is a condition that relates to hormonal imbalances. This includes an excess of male type, androgenic hormones, such as testosterone, and a resistance to insulin (the hormone that regulates your blood sugar). Combined, these impact women's periods, skin, hair and their ability to maintain their weight.

What are the most common symptoms of PCOS?

- irregular periods
- difficulty losing weight
- acne and oily skin
- increased facial and body hair
- hormonal imbalances

Does PCOS cause infertility?

Women with PCOS get pregnant and have healthy babies every day. However, PCOS is associated with irregular periods and inconsistent ovulation. Some women with PCOS need fertility assistance.

What areas can be affected by PCOS?

PCOS is a condition that interferes with women's menstrual cycles, ovulation, and fertility. It can also affect other aspects of their life, such as their weight, skin and hair.

How common is PCOS?

In the UK, 1 in 10 women suffer from PCOS, and over half of them don't have symptoms.

How is PCOS diagnosed?

In order to diagnose PCOS, at least two of the following three symptoms must be present/identified:

- irregular periods or infrequent periods
- blood tests that indicate high levels of hormones, such as testosterone, or clinical evidence of high androgen levels through unwanted hair and skin disorders
- a scan showing polycystic ovaries

What causes PCOS?

There are genetic factors that influence the two causes of PCOS, which are interconnected and interrelated. The individual has no control of these factors. Excessive male type androgenic hormones, such as testosterone, and an insulin resistance lead to the symptoms they may be experiencing.

Can PCOS be cured?

While PCOS can't be cured, rest assured, there are many ways to reduce and manage symptoms through medication, diet, exercise, and lifestyle. Treatment options will vary depending on their symptoms.

PCOS myths



“If I go on a diet, I will cure my PCOS”

While dietary changes cannot cure PCOS, many women find that a healthier diet with more vegetables and protein helps them not only feel better, but also reduces their symptoms.



“Women with PCOS are always overweight”

Weight gain is one of the most frustrating aspects of PCOS and does impact some women. However, weight gain does not affect everyone with this condition.



“I will definitely pass PCOS onto my daughter”

While there are genetic factors associated with PCOS, many women do not pass this along to their daughters. It's not something that is inevitable.



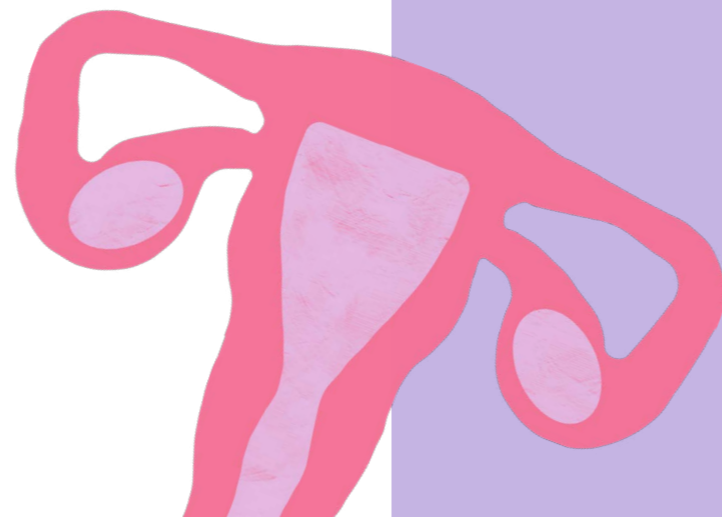
“I can't have IVF or fertility drugs because I will make too many eggs or embryos”

It's understandable to worry about how PCOS will impact fertility treatments. Rest assured fertility specialists are experts at treating women with PCOS. They use evidence-based guidelines that reduce the risks of producing too many eggs, while at the same time increasing the likelihood of conceiving.



“There are different types of PCOS”

When people talk about different types of PCOS, they're referring to the different ways that each woman exhibits symptoms. Some women have a few mild symptoms that have little impact on their lives, while others struggle with multiple disruptive symptoms. And of course, there's all the manifestations in between. The bottom line is - everyone with PCOS is different.

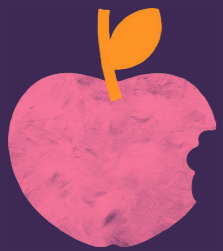


What happens to employees after they are diagnosed with PCOS?

- **They may feel a mix of emotions.**
Part relief to have an answer for their symptoms and part overwhelmed. Both are perfectly normal and it's important to allow colleagues to take time to process this information.
- **They'll want to speak to a specialist.**
Because everyone is different and has different goals, your employees will need to set aside time to talk about their diagnosis, how they can manage symptoms, and what they are most concerned about. Whether it's fertility, weight loss, managing acne and hair, or dealing with irregular periods, their women's health specialist can help them develop a personalised plan to support them both in and out of the workplace.

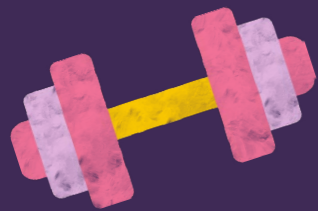


Helpful lifestyle tips to share with colleagues who have PCOS



Eat well

Because PCOS is related to an insulin resistance, reducing blood sugar by eating a balanced diet can lead to a significant improvement in the symptoms of PCOS. Those with PCOS should try eating more protein and vegetables and reducing their carbs.



Weight training and resistance exercise

Research has shown that regular exercise plus a little weight and resistance training helps reverse the insulin resistance in PCOS. Colleagues with PCOS should try incorporating yoga, planks, and squats into their workouts, and don't forget the weights.



Keep an eye on your sleep

Many women with PCOS also have disturbed sleep, which impacts their appetite and their hormones. Many people find that setting a sleep schedule helps them fall asleep easier, as well as, turning off all electronics, and lowering room temperature. Ideally, people with PCOS should aim for 7 - 8 hours of restful sleep each night.



Practice self-care

It is important that your employees find ways to be kind to themselves. Breathing exercises, yoga and meditation can really help.

What can workplaces do to support their employees?



Education and training

Train your team (not just your female employees) about the symptoms of PCOS so that line managers, HRs and direct reports feel more comfortable talking about it and know the pathway to support.



Appoint women's health champions

A women's health champion is someone who can offer support to others and start the conversation around women's health issues at work. This is a simple way to break down stigma and encourage openness.



Offer personalised support

Give your colleagues free access to specialist PCOS support. Ideally, choose an easy-to-access, confidential digital solution, like the Peppy app.



Encourage flexible working

Flexible working can enable colleagues to manage their symptoms in the comfort of their own home and take breaks when needed, with no questions asked. If flexible working isn't an option for colleagues, make sure they are taking their full break allowance.



Start a PCOS group

Self-help groups or wellbeing groups can offer colleagues a safe, judgement-free space to open up and connect with others going through a similar experience. These can be done in-person, as coffee mornings or virtually as a WhatsApp group.

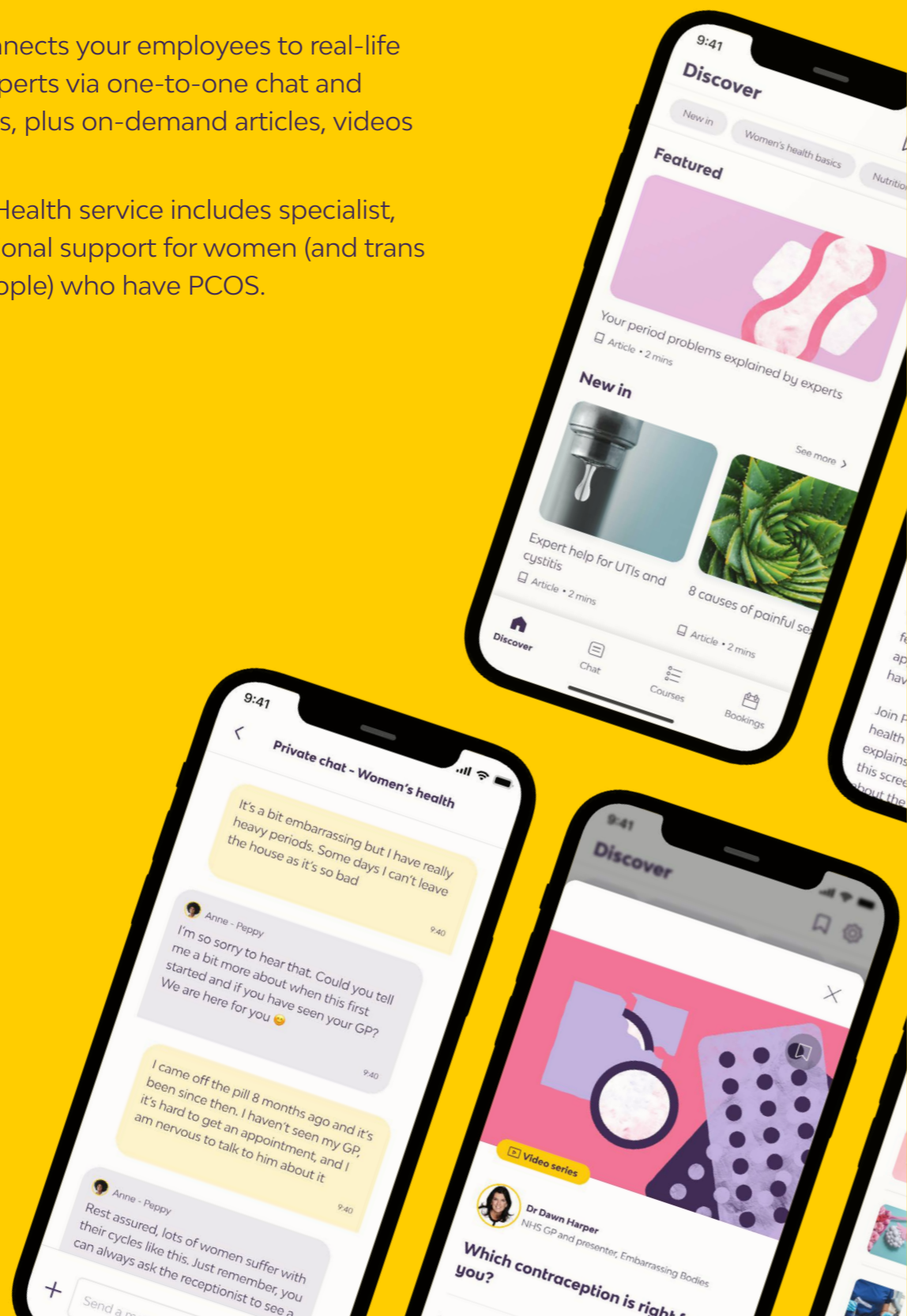


How can Peppy's Women's Health service help?



The Peppy app connects your employees to real-life women's health experts via one-to-one chat and virtual consultations, plus on-demand articles, videos and audios.

Peppy's Women's Health service includes specialist, practical and emotional support for women (and trans and non-binary people) who have PCOS.



Hear more about how Peppy can support your people, and your business



Find out why you should offer Women's Health support from Peppy's experts

Book a call