

October 25, 2024

THE PATIENT PRESCRIPTION



Your Health Begins Here



Quality Spotlight - Women's Health



HopeHealth's quality focus for October is **women's health** (breast/cervical cancer). This clinical focus includes measures like mammograms, pap smears, HPV vaccines, and contraceptive counseling.

Below, read about Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS).

What is Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)?



Millions of women are affected by Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), a common hormonal disorder affecting individuals with ovaries. Yet it remains one of the most underdiagnosed and misunderstood health conditions, often leaving women struggling with its hidden challenges.

It is estimated that about 5 to 10 million women in the United States have PCOS, making it one of the most common hormonal disorders among individuals of reproductive age. This equates to approximately 6-12% of women of reproductive age (ages 15 to 44), although the condition can affect individuals of all ages, from adolescence to menopause. The true prevalence of PCOS is estimated to be higher since many women with the condition have not been diagnosed and may not know they have it.

PCOS can occur shortly after puberty, in later teen years, or early adulthood and can present a wide range of symptoms. The most common symptoms include:

Irregular Periods:

- Infrequent, irregular, or prolonged menstrual cycles

Excess Androgen Levels:

- Elevated levels of androgens (male hormones) can lead to physical signs such as:
 - Hirsutism: Excess hair growth, typically on the face, chest, back, or abdomen
 - Acne: Severe or persistent acne, especially on the face, chest, and upper back
 - Male-pattern Baldness: Thinning hair or hair loss on the scalp

Polycystic Ovaries:

- Ovarian cysts or enlarged ovaries and follicles around the ovaries

Weight Gain or Difficulty Losing Weight:

- Weight gain, especially around the abdominal area, and difficulty losing weight despite efforts

Fertility Issues:

- Infertility due to irregular or absent ovulation, making it harder to conceive

Insulin Resistance:

- Insulin resistance, which can lead to elevated blood sugar levels and increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Skin Conditions:

- Dark patches of skin, particularly in body creases such as the neck, groin, and under the breasts (a condition known as acanthosis nigricans)
- Acne

Mood Changes:

- Mood disorders such as depression, anxiety, and mood swings

These symptoms can vary in severity, and some women may have only a few signs, while others experience a combination of several. Women who notice any of these symptoms should consult a healthcare provider for diagnosis and management. Symptoms of PCOS can overlap with other health issues, leading some women to be unaware that they might have PCOS. For instance, a woman may think her irregular periods are just a normal part of life rather than a sign of PCOS.

Women are most often diagnosed in their 20s and 30s, especially those who report trouble getting pregnant to their health care providers, since PCOS is a leading cause

of infertility.

Various tools are used to diagnose PCOS, including clinical symptoms, physical exams, blood work, and ultrasounds. It is often under-diagnosed and frequently takes more than a year to get a diagnosis, as the process includes multiple provider visits, referrals to medical specialists, and ruling out conditions like thyroid disease.

There is not currently a cure, but PCOS can be well-treated and managed. The first line of treatment typically involves lifestyle changes, such as adopting a healthy diet, engaging in regular physical activity, managing stress, and achieving weight loss if necessary. While weight loss can be challenging, medications may be prescribed if lifestyle interventions prove insufficient. For many women with PCOS, losing just 5-10% of their body weight can significantly reduce symptoms.

Medications are also available to help address irregular menstrual cycles, excess androgens, and glucose intolerance. If lifestyle changes don't improve fertility, fertility drugs may be considered.

Women with PCOS usually work closely with their primary care providers, but multidisciplinary teams may also be involved. Your care team may also include specialists like gynecologists, dermatologists, behavioral health consultants, and registered dietitians. For those trying to conceive, referrals to fertility or reproductive specialists can be made when necessary.

Women with PCOS each have their own unique journeys, and it's essential to work closely with your health care team to diagnose, treat, and help manage the condition over time. Utilizing all available resources is important to help manage symptoms, optimize health, and decrease the risk of developing long-term complications. It is also necessary to be aware of the psychological impact of PCOS, including anxiety, depression, and body image issues. Mental health professionals are becoming more involved in the treatment process, encouraging more holistic care for those affected by the condition.

For women experiencing symptoms related to PCOS, the first step is to contact their health care provider. With early diagnosis and treatment, symptoms can be well managed, and long-term health risks can be minimized.

New Hours For HopeHealth Pharmacy Pine Needles



To better serve our patients, HopeHealth Pharmacy **Pine Needles** is offering the following extended hours:

8 AM to 7 PM | Monday - Friday
9 AM to 2 PM | Saturday

Online Bill Pay

Did you know that you can conveniently and securely pay your HopeHealth bill online? You don't even have to be signed up to the patient portal to do so. [Visit this link](#) or use the "Online Bill Pay" button on the home page of our website, hope-health.org.

Online Bill Pay

Access Hope: After-Hours Care



Access Hope is our convenient after-hours program for patients to receive care when life doesn't go as planned.

Why HopeHealth Patients Use Access Hope:

- Your primary care provider isn't available when you're not feeling well
- You are sick after-hours or on Saturday
- You are a new patient whose busy schedule doesn't allow you to be seen during normal provider hours

Our staff of health care providers at Access Hope is available in Florence and Manning, **Monday-Saturday from 8am-8pm.**

Examples of after-hours care services provided by Access Hope are minor aches and pains, cold and flu sick visits, treatment of high blood pressure, management of diabetes and other chronic conditions, immunizations/flu shots/PPD testing, urinalysis, annual and pre-employment physicals, and STD treatment.

For more information about Access Hope, [visit our website.](#)

An on-call provider is also available 24/7 for patients.

Dr. Debra Hopla Honored as FMU Trustees' Research Scholar



Debra Hopla, DNP, APRN-NC, was named a Francis Marion University Board of Trustees' Scholar for 2024. Dr. Hopla is a board-certified nurse practitioner at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza specializing in family medicine.

Dr. Hopla also joined FMU's nursing faculty in 2012, where she is the director of the family nurse practitioner tracks in the Master of Science in Nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs. She specializes in research surrounding health policy issues for nurse practitioners, pain management, sexual and reproductive health issues, and bridging social determinants of health.

Dr. Hopla is a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and chairs the S.C. Board of Nursing Advisory Committee for Nursing Education. She has received numerous awards including the SC Palmetto Gold Award, published twenty-five peer-reviewed articles, and secured research grants totaling more than \$5 million. Congratulations, Dr. Hopla!

Downcountry Grill Now At HopeHealth Medical Plaza!



Brought to you by the creators of Tubb's Shrimp & Fish Company and King Jefe, Downcountry Grill is thrilled to serve not just HopeHealth patients and staff but the entire community with a tasty and nutritious menu.

Online Ordering

You asked, and they delivered – literally! Downcountry Grill is now offering online ordering with pick-up and delivery options. Enjoy mouth-watering meals crafted with the freshest ingredients without leaving the comfort of your home or office.

Why Choose Downcountry Grill?

- **Delicious Variety:** The menu is designed to nourish your body and delight your taste buds. From hearty salads to savory entrees, there's something for everyone.
- **Convenient:** With the new online ordering and delivery service, enjoying your favorite dishes has never been easier.
- **Community-Centered:** Proudly serving the Florence community and providing a cozy spot for friends, families, and colleagues to gather and enjoy wholesome food.

Order Now!

[Click here](#) to explore the menu and place your order. Whether you're planning a breakfast or lunch break, Downcountry Grill is ready to serve!

Hours of Operation

Monday – Friday
8 - 10:30 AM | Breakfast
11 AM – 2 PM | Lunch

Located at HopeHealth Medical Plaza, 360 N. Irby St., Florence, SC!

Recipe Spotlight

Healthy Halloween Treats

As an alternative to candy, have fun with the kids making these adorable and delicious Halloween treats!

Ghost Boo-nanas

4 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 bananas peeled and cut in half
- 12 chocolate chips

Directions:

1. Just before serving, peel and half the bananas.
2. Place 2 chocolate chips for the eyes and 1 for the mouth.
3. Eat or place upright on a tray and serve.



Clementine Jack-O-Lanterns

4 servings

Ingredients:

- 4 clementines
- 1 stalk celery, sliced in half and cut into small "stems"

Directions:

1. Have kids peel the clementines and place a celery stem in each one.

2. Eat or serve.

Peanut Butter Spider Snacks

4 servings

Ingredients:

- Ritz or other whole grain crackers (2 per spider)
- Pretzel sticks (8 per spider)
- Raisins or chocolate chips (2 per spider)
- Peanut butter or other nut/seed butter

Directions:

1. Take one cracker and add peanut butter.
2. Place 4 pretzels on each side, making sure one end is close to the center of the cracker for stability.
3. Add peanut butter to the other cracker and place on top.
4. Add peanut butter to the raisins or chocolate chips and place on the top for eyes.
5. Eat or serve.



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hope-health.org

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