

# White women with PCOS more likely to have anxiety than black women with condition

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White women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) have significantly higher anxiety symptoms compared to black women with the condition, a new study suggests. These symptoms may be related to obesity, according to the research to be presented Monday, March 25 at ENDO 2019, the annual meeting of the Endocrine Society, in New Orleans, La.

"It is important to screen all women with PCOS for anxiety and depression symptoms and offer treatments targeted at weight management to help improve these symptoms," said senior author Anuja Dokras, M.D., Ph.D., of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pa. "While this may be especially helpful for [white women](#), our study confirms the need to screen both races for anxiety and [depressive symptoms](#) given their high prevalence."

PCOS occurs in as many as 10 percent of women. It is the most common endocrine disorder affecting reproductive-aged women. These women have a number of symptoms, including menstrual problems, excessive hair growth, weight gain, and an increased risk of diabetes and high cholesterol. Women with PCOS also have an elevated risk of moderate and severe depressive and anxiety symptoms.

This is the first study to examine how mental health symptoms linked to PCOS vary depending on race.

The new study included 272 women with PCOS and 295 women without the condition, all ages 18 to 50. Of the women with PCOS, 70 were black and 202 were white. In the control group, 109 women were white and 186 were black. The study found, that overall, 72 percent of women with PCOS had anxiety symptoms on screening tests, compared with 52 percent of women without PCOS.

The researchers found 76 percent of white women

with PCOS had anxiety symptoms, compared with 61 percent of black women with PCOS. Body-mass index, a measure of body fat based on height and weight, was correlated with anxiety scores in white women but not [black women](#) in the overall population.

There were no [racial differences](#) in the prevalence of [depression symptoms](#) or scores among black and white women with PCOS. Black women with PCOS scored lower on some quality of life measures than white women with PCOS. There were no significant differences in average anxiety or depression scores in women without PCOS.

"Obesity is one factor that has been found to influence racial differences in the prevalence of mood disorders in the general population," Dokras said. "Now we know obesity also plays a role in anxiety in PCOS, which may help provide better advice and treatment for women with the condition."

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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