

Dr Clare Boothroyd presents the session - PCOS and Managing Excess hair

Voice 1:

Hello everyone. You're watching a video about PCOS and managing excess hair.

This videostream has been developed in partnership with Women's Health, QUT, and POSAA.

The guest presenter here with me today is Dr Clare Boothroyd who is a registered endocrinologist and gynaecologist, and Queensland's leading fertility specialist.

Dr Boothroyd is actively involved in research in many areas related to women's health and fertility, in particular unexplained infertility and PCOS.

Dr Boothroyd's practice, Assisted Conception Australia, is located in the Greenslopes Specialist Centre at Greenslopes.

Welcome Dr. Boothroyd. So to begin our discussion, can you please explain to the women who have PCOS how can they manage their hair growth efficiently and effectively.

Dr Clare Boothroyd:

It's a very distressing symptom that women who have had PCOS for a number of years complain of. It's important to understand that in PCOS, some women, not all women have high levels of male hormones. Now we have a certain number of hair follicles on our skin and if we are female they grow in a female pattern – they grow slowly and they're fine and they're downy and soft. Now if a woman is exposed to high levels of male hormone, the hair follicles can change its pattern of growth and come to grow like a male hair, and if we think of hair on males in its distribution, the moustaches, beard, abdomen upper thighs, and is thicker grows faster darker curly and what actually happens is once the hair follicles have been transformed to that male pattern of growth it remains with that male pattern of growth forever. It's an irreversible change. Now the key here is to understand about the duration of exposure. All women have some male hormones and women with PCOS often have more. So some of their hair follicles may become sensitized to that male hormone and therefore change in their growth pattern. IF you think about a young male who has just gone through puberty – very high levels of testosterone, but if you look at his beard its looking quite sparse. If you look the same male ten or fifteen years later it's much more dense, stronger growth and this because he's been exposed to testosterone for a long period of time, and that's the same for women with PCOS. So I always say perfect female in our society is the blonde hairless nymph, and very few of us measure up to that one, but the thing is if they actually have high levels of male hormone from a young age they become progressively more hairy and once that happens its really about body maintenance, removal, the only thing that really takes the hair away is electrolysis

So young women really who have that tendency to high male hormones should take the contraceptive pill if they can

The women who can't, and there are some very few women who can't take the contraceptive pill for medical reasons, and they are in a very difficult situation unfortunately.

(End of part one.)

Voice One:

Thank you, Dr Boothroyd.