

## Pelvic Congestion Syndrome (PCS)

Pelvic Congestion Syndrome is a condition in which the veins in the pelvis become very dilated (widened). It is unclear why it happens, but there is excessive pooling of blood inside these veins. It is commonly associated with varicose veins in the vulva or lower extremities.

### Symptoms

The most common symptom of pelvic congestion syndrome is pelvic pain that changes throughout the menstrual cycle. The pain is most commonly described as a dull ache or heaviness in the lower abdomen or back starting before menses begin. Pain can also occur or worsen with prolonged standing or with sexual activity. Many people describe increased pain after intercourse, although pain may also occur during intercourse.

The pain tends to occur on one side, but it can shift from one side to the other. It is common for the symptoms to begin after a pregnancy and to worsen with each subsequent pregnancy. Women may also have hemorrhoids or varicose veins in the vulva or legs.

Diagnosis is most often confirmed by venogram, a real-time x-ray that measures the amount of dilation and the speed of blood flow.

### Main causes of PCS

No one knows exactly why people develop PCS. Some risk factors have been identified. These include: pregnancy, estrogen therapy and heavy lifting.

### Treatment

A variety of treatments have been described, ranging from medical or hormonal treatment to surgery.

**Hormonal treatments** are used to suppress the menstrual cycle. Progesterone (tablets or injections) or leuprolide injections may be used.

**Embolization** of the affected veins may be performed by an interventional radiologist.

**Ovarian vein ligation** may be performed surgically – usually via laparoscopic route.

Other surgical options include removal of one or both ovaries, with or without removal of the uterus.

We recommend that you have a detailed discussion with your doctor to determine the most appropriate treatment for you.

