



Health Professionals
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Reproductive Needs of
Children and Adolescents

Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI)

What Is Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) And How Common Is It?

Patients with POI have ovaries that do not produce the hormone estrogen (ovarian insufficiency) despite hormonal messages from the brain telling them to do so. This means your ovaries are not producing eggs/oocytes normally. Patients with POI have very few eggs in their ovaries. In other words, the ovaries have stopped functioning before the expected age of menopause (change of life). It is uncommon to have POI in adolescence (less than 0.3% of patients). Up to 20-30% of patients with POI will have female family members who also have POI.

Is POI permanent?

POI is not always permanent. Up to 25% of patients with this diagnosis release eggs from the ovaries (ovulate) and up to 5-10% of patients with this diagnosis can conceive spontaneously despite blood tests and even ovarian biopsies proving their condition. If you receive a diagnosis of POI, your doctor will talk to you at length about options for pregnancy.

What Are The Symptoms Of POI?

Patients with POI usually have periods that are absent or irregular. They can also have menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats. Some patients with POI experience problems getting pregnant.

How does your provider diagnose POI?

POI is usually diagnosed through blood tests. Genetic testing will also be done and this includes checking your chromosomes. If you have Turner's syndrome on chromosome testing, the aorta is carefully checked for dilation. Since there is an association with other autoimmune diseases, your doctor will screen for these as well. In women with POI, there is a higher risk for bone loss and a study called a DEXA scan is done to monitor bone health.

How Do You Treat POI?

Patients with POI require hormonal treatment with estrogen and progesterone as well as calcium and Vitamin D supplements. Any underlying autoimmune disease should also be treated. Your doctor can also help connect you to a resource to provide psychological support to help you cope and adapt to this diagnosis.