

What is Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome?

A condition in women that results in increased androgens (male hormones) and irregular menstrual cycles. Changes in diet and lifestyle have been shown to reduce the risk for disease and improve symptoms among women with this condition. Symptoms commonly experienced in women with PCOS include:

- Insulin Resistance
- Excessive Weight Gain
- Acanthosis nigricans (dark, discolored patches on skin)
- Hair loss from head (alopecia)
- Excessive hair growth on face

Insulin Resistance and PCOS

Many women with PCOS have insulin resistance, a condition in which your body does not respond to insulin, a hormone which allows glucose/sugar (energy that fuels your body) to enter your cells. Without insulin working well in the body, high levels of glucose/sugar can build up in the blood. As a result, women with PCOS are at a high risk for developing type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and risk factors that may lead to other health conditions. Insulin resistance can be improved by:

- Losing weight
 - If overweight, weight loss of 5 to 10% of total body weight has been shown to improve insulin resistance and other symptoms of PCOS.
- Regular exercise
- Eating a healthy diet and following a regular meal pattern
- Limiting carbohydrates

Nutrition Goals for Improving PCOS

- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and beans.
- Eat protein-containing foods such as lean meats, poultry, and eggs, with meals and snacks to add fullness and help manage blood sugar levels.
- Select foods high in omega-3 fatty acids. Examples include fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines, and albacore tuna), seeds (flax seeds, chia seeds), oils (canola, olive, peanut) and nuts (walnuts).
- Limit simple sugars and refined carbohydrates such as white breads, pasta, rice, and sugar in beverages and desserts.



Promoting Healthy Weight Loss

- Exercise regularly. Aim for at least 30 min of physical activity per day such as walking, hiking, fitness classes, participating in sports, or gardening.
- Cutting about 300-500 calories from your day by eating less and burning calories through exercise may help you to lose about one pound per week.

Patient Education

Nutrition

- Avoid mindless eating. Listen to your body's signals to decide when you are truly hungry and when you are satisfied.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water daily.
- Choose calorie free beverages to limit extra calories.
- Keep a consistent eating schedule and aim to eat at least 3 meals around the same time every day. Skipping meals leads to overeating later.
- Monitor your portions sizes by using measuring cups or following the serving size on the food label.
- Try keeping a food journal to monitor your food choices.

Make Smart Carbohydrate Choices

- Foods that affect your blood glucose the most are those that contain carbohydrates which includes grains, fruits, milk and yogurt, sweets, and starchy vegetables (peas, corn, and potatoes).
- Stick to smaller portions. The amount of carbohydrates you eat effects your blood sugar.
- Choose whole grains such as brown rice, oats, barley, whole wheat breads and pasta. Look for the word "whole" as the first ingredient on the nutrition label.
- Decrease intake of refined carbohydrates and simple sugars such as white breads, pastas, and rice. Limit sweets, desserts, and sweetened beverages.
- Eat balanced meals including carbohydrate, protein, and fat as it is important to overall nutrition and blood sugar control.

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For more information or to speak with a Registered Dietitian, call