

Healthy living with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)



This handout gives you tips to help you manage and improve your PCOS.

Healthy living with PCOS includes:

- eating healthy
- being active

Eating healthy and being active can help you to lose weight, which can improve your PCOS symptoms. Even just a 5% loss in body weight can help improve your chances of becoming pregnant by helping you to ovulate and have regular periods.

Other benefits of eating healthy and being active include:

- ✓ lowers insulin levels and insulin resistance
- ✓ lowers your risk of heart disease and diabetes
- ✓ improves mood and self-esteem
- ✓ reduces stress

How do I eat healthy to improve my insulin levels?

Food is made up of carbohydrates, protein and fat. Carbohydrates affect your insulin levels the most, while protein and fat have a smaller effect.

You may have heard that you should eat a low carbohydrate, high protein diet when you have PCOS, but this is **not** true.

Instead of avoiding carbohydrates, you just need to make sure you are eating the right kind.

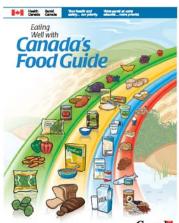


Choose unprocessed carbohydrates such as whole grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, and milk products to help improve your insulin levels.

Tips to eat healthy

Eat 3 balanced meals each day

- This means including 3 to 4 food groups from Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide at each meal http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-quide-aliment/index-eng.php.
- Eat breakfast every day, within an hour of waking up (see page 9 for a healthy breakfast recipe).
- Have a healthy snack in between meals if your meals are spaced more than 3 to 5 hours apart.



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Fit more fruit and vegetables into your day

- Fill your freezer with frozen fruit and vegetables – they are just as good for you as fresh.
- Add a serving of fruit to your breakfast, or as a healthy snack (see page 9 for a recipe).
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- Have a side salad or steamed vegetables each night with dinner.
- Add extra vegetables to pasta sauce, omelettes, canned soup, on top of pizza or in sandwiches.

Focus on whole grains

- Buy 100% whole grain bread, pasta, rice and couscous.
- Try new grains such as quinoa, bulgur, barley, spelt, buckwheat, farro, millet, and wheat berries (see page 6 for a recipe).



- Add whole grains to your baking by using oats, wheat germ, or wheat bran and bake with whole wheat flour *.
 - * Check online to learn how to substitute whole wheat flour for white flour in recipes. It will depend on what you are making.

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Choose healthier fats

- Cook with canola or olive oil.
- Include avocados, fatty fish, nuts and seeds in your diet (see page 9 for a recipe!).
- Limit your intake of saturated fats such as butter, higher fat dairy products, and fatty cuts of meat.





Make smart choices when eating at restaurants

- Watch out for creamy sauces, buttered vegetables, and fried foods. Go for baked, grilled or roasted options.
- Be mindful of portions stop eating when you are full and ask for a take-out container for the rest.
- Make modifications ask for low-fat, low-salt, whole wheat and extra vegetables.



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Try not to drink your calories

- Choose water and sugar-free beverages instead of pop or juice.
- Limit high calorie additions to your coffee and tea such as cream, sugar, and honey.
- Limit your alcohol intake to one drink or less each day.

Tips to become more active

Make physical activity a regular part of your daily routine. Both aerobic and resistance-based exercise are important for your health.

Aerobic exercise

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines suggest: 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic exercise each week in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

150 minutes each week is the ideal, but you do not have to start there! Start by adding 10 minutes of aerobic exercise to your day and increase it gradually as you are able.

Ideas:

- Go for a hike with family, friends, or your dog!
- Take a dance class.
- Go for a brisk walk after dinner.
- Ride your bike to run errands.
- Find a walking group or buddy to join.
 Try out mall walking in the winter when it's too cold to walk outside!



Resistance exercise

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines suggest: muscle and bone building activities at least 2 days each week.

Try adding 10 minutes of strength exercises to your day and increase time and intensity as you gain strength.

Ideas:

- Use your own body weight in exercises such as squats, lunges, push-ups and planks (beginners can start with knees on the floor).
- Try using a light resistance band or small dumbbells.
- Target large muscle groups (legs, core and shoulders).
- Use the internet to learn how to do different exercises.
- Start at home you do not need to go to a gym!

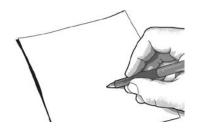
Overcoming barriers to physical activity

Barrier	Solutions	
I don't have enough	- Break up your exercise into small chunks throughout	
time.	your day.	
	 Use your lunch hour at work to go for a walk. 	
	 A short 10 to 20 minute workout is better than nothing at all! 	
I don't have energy	- Wake up early (and go to bed early) so you can get	
to work out.	the exercise in before you get tired from your day.	
I'm busy with my	- Exercise with your kids! Take them to the park to	
kids.	play tag, go on a walk, or teach them a new sport.	
I'm out of shape	- Start slow with walking and a light exercise band or	
and will find	3 lbs dumbbells for resistance. If you don't start	
exercise too hard.	somewhere, you will never improve!	
I don't have money	Exercise at home, using your body weight (such as	
for a gym	push ups and plank) or inexpensive equipment.	
membership.	- Use another space such as a park or indoor mall.	
	 Invest in a work out video. Borrow one from the 	
	library or watch one on Youtube.	
I have a hard time	 Make realistic short and long term goals. 	
starting and	 Ask friends or family for support. 	
keeping up with	- Share your goals with as many people as you can.	
my plans.	 Give yourself non-food rewards when you reach a goal. 	
I don't feel like it.	- "Do it now – feel like doing it later". Once you've	
	exercised, you are really glad you did!	

Tips to help you maintain your plan

Journaling

Keeping track of your eating and physical activity will make you aware of your habits and what you may want to change.



- Record what you eat and drink in the "Food Diary" that you were given at your first visit.
- You can also write down your physical activity on this same journal.
- Download an app to keep track of your food and/or exercise, such as My Fitness Pal and Lose It!



Goal setting

- Use the handout "My Action Plan" to set your goal(s).
 Focus on only one or two goals at a time,
 and make sure they are realistic and achievable.
- Achieving your goals is hard work and you may feel like giving up – but be persistent and keep in mind the reasons why you want to lose weight.



Get support from friends and family

- Consider what you need from your friends and family to help you reach your goals.
 Your friends and family can:
 - · keep you accountable
 - cheer you on in your goals
 - provide reassurance and understanding
 - make healthy changes with you
- Ask your friends and family for this support and be specific about what you need. You will be more likely to continue if those around you are supportive and/or involved in your healthy living goals.



Change your environment

- Keep unhealthy foods out of view or even out of the house.
- Keep healthy snacks in view. For example, cut up veggies and keep them in a clear container in your fridge and keep a bowl of fresh fruit on your counter.
- Keep workout gear in view. For example have a fresh workout shirt and walking shoes at the door or in your car to help you stick to your exercise plans.



 Change your walking or driving route so that you are not passing by temptations every day.

Create a schedule

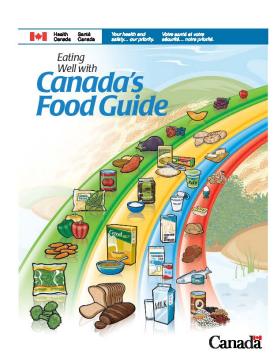
 Write out a meal plan at the beginning of each week. Having healthy meals planned for each day means you will not need to resort to takeout.



- Make it easier to stick to your meal plan by:
 - Making a list of all the ingredients you need.
 - · Buying all your groceries on the weekend.
 - Preparing some of the food on weekends, such as cooking the rice and chopping the vegetables. Make a recipe and freeze it –then you can reheat it on a weekday.
- Schedule your workouts and give yourself reminders to help you stick to them.

Helpful resources

- If you are planning to lose weight or increase physical activity, discuss your plans with a dietitian or your family doctor.
- Hamilton Health Sciences patient education handouts (ask your health care provider for copies or visit www.hhsc.ca):
 - Eating More Fibre
 - Healthy Servings
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide: http://www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=804
- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php



Recipes to get you started

Easy breakfast muesli

1/3 cup quick rolled oats, cooked 1/2 tbsp chia or flax seeds 3/4 tsp ground cinnamon 2/3 cup skim milk 1 banana, sliced



Mix together the quick rolled oats, chia or flax seeds, cinnamon, milk, and sliced banana, and stir together.

Top with one or two of the following: ¼ cup berries, ¼ cup chopped fruit, 2 tbsp dried fruit, 2 tbsp chopped nuts, or 1 tbsp peanut or almond butter.

Serves 1

Chocolate banana smoothie



- 1 banana
- 1 cup skim milk
- 1 cup ice cubes
- 2 tsp cocoa powder
- 1 tsp peanut butter (optional)

Add the banana, milk, ice cubes and cocoa to a blender and mix until smooth.

Serves 1

Chickpea and quinoa salad

1 cup quinoa
1 ½ cups cold water
2 cups chickpeas
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
½ of a cucumber, diced
2 green onions, sliced
1 cup of loosely packed flat leaf parsley, chopped
¼ cup low fat feta cheese
2 tbsp olive oil
Juice from ½ of a lemon



Serves 4

Add the quinoa and water to a pot and cover with a lid. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Remove from heat when done and let cool.

Once the quinoa is cooled, add it to a large bowl with the chickpeas, tomato halves, diced cucumber, sliced green onion, chopped parsley and feta cheese. Stir in juice from half a lemon and the olive oil.



Maple-glazed salmon

- 1 lb salmon fillet, bones removed
- 3 tbsp non-hydrogenated margarine
- 3 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp low sodium soy sauce

Serves 4

Preheat oven to 425°F. Place salmon in a baking dish. Melt margarine and mix with syrup, mustard, soy sauce. Pour over salmon. Bake until salmon flakes with a fork, or about 12 minutes. Serve with steamed vegetables and a grain such as brown rice or quinoa.

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