



Indian Dietetic Association

PCOS

POLY CYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME

What is PCOS?

Poly Cystic Ovary Syndrome, commonly known as PCOS, is an endocrine problem of women of reproductive age. While the cause for PCOS is unknown, the symptoms include menstrual irregularity, infertility, pregnancy complications, hirsutism (facial hair), acne, acanthosis nigricans (darkening of skin on nape of neck, under arms, inner thigh) and an increased prevalence of obesity and abdominal obesity.

Exercise in PCOS

Exercise should be an integral part of every body's life, but for girls/ women with PCOS it holds more importance. Exercise improves muscle mass, decreases the fat mass and hence improves insulin sensitivity. It helps release endorphins (feel good hormones), and hence helps fight the low feeling which these girls/ women might go through. Exercises like walking, cycling, swimming or weight training, done at least 5 days a week, can help to control the associated metabolic problems and weight gain.

PCOS & Associated Risks

PCOS predisposes to various metabolic problems including impaired glucose tolerance (pre-diabetes), diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, dyslipidemia (decreased plasma high-density lipoprotein cholesterol [HDL-C] and increased plasma triglycerides), hypertension, inflammation (increased CRP level).

Treatment of PCOS

First line of treatment for PCOS is life style modification. Life style modification includes eating right, exercising regularly and psychological counselling. It is often found that girls and women with PCOS have a lot of body image issues due to weight, acne, facial hair and hence are more prone to depression and eating disorders.

DISCLAIMER

This document is for information purpose only. It acts as a basic guideline for PCOS. For specific and individual dietary advice and meal plans, please consult a qualified dietitian/nutritionist.

Dietary Modification in PCOS

Weight loss / fat loss (in lean PCOS) is the cornerstone of management of this syndrome. Hence dietary modifications are mandatory. Some simple tips to modify the diet are:

1. Include protein in every meal that you eat. Mantra of good eating for PCOS should be 'Protein First'.
2. Eat plenty of fresh vegetables in the main meals – 'Eat your rainbow' should be the mantra of choosing vegetables. Eating vegetables with different colours like red (amaranth, beets, tomatoes), orange (carrots, pumpkin), green (green leafy vegetables, and others), yellow (lemons), white (ash gourd, bottle gourd) and purple (brinjal, turnip and yam).
3. Eat nuts every day. Nuts like almonds, walnuts, pistachio even peanuts provide good quality fats.
4. Choose the right quality and quantity of complex carbohydrates. Choose whole grains like brown rice, whole wheat, millets over refined cereals like maida.
5. Choose the right kind of cooking fat. Monounsaturated fats like olive oil, ground nut oil, rice bran oil, mustard oil, canola oil are good fats to cook food in. Limit use of these fats to 3-4 teaspoons/person/day.
6. Avoid foods containing trans fat and saturated fats as they increase insulin resistance. These are present in bakery foods, ready to eat snacks, etc.
7. Anti-inflammatory agents like turmeric, cinnamon, amla, etc are very important in these diets as PCOS is an inflammatory condition.

