

QUESTION	ANSWER
<b>NUTRITION GUIDELINES</b>	
<p>What are the PCOS Nutrition Guidelines?</p>	<p>Androgen Excess &amp; PCOS Society (AE-PCOS) is an international organization, and it recommends* implementing a balanced diet approach following the general population guidelines (for more information, click here <a href="#">Canada's Food Guide</a>)</p> <p>There is no single diet that works better than a balanced, healthy diet. Eat a variety of healthy foods each day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Eating fresh fruit and vegetables (50% of diet)</li> <li>● Eating lean meats and other proteins (25% of diet)</li> <li>● Eating whole grain foods (25% of diet)</li> <li>● Cutting out or reducing food such as sugary drinks and foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats</li> <li>● Making water your main drink</li> </ul> <p><i>*AE-PCOS is currently reviewing their recommendations. To learn more, visit there: <a href="#">Home - Androgen Excess &amp; PCOS Society (ae-society.org)</a></i></p>
<b>MILK &amp; DAIRY PRODUCTS</b>	
<p>Are milk and dairy products recommended if I have PCOS?</p>	<p>There is not a lot of research done on milk and dairy products as it relates to PCOS. However, whole dairy-full fat dairy products can support satiety/feeling full and satisfied, because of the fat and the protein content. If you enjoy full fat dairy then have less (½ cup vs 1 cup) and enjoy.</p> <p>There are good fats, vitamins and minerals in dairy products that are important in immune and anti-inflammatory function and bone maintenance. Dairy products are recommended as part of a well-balanced diet.</p> <p>Some dairy products may have a high amount of added sugars. It is recommended to read labels closely and choose dairy products that don't have added sugars or have low added sugar content.</p> <p><i>Note: See below question on "Acne" for more information to consider.</i></p>
<b>NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS</b>	
<p>What do you recommend in natural health products for PCOS?</p>	<p>There is not a lot of good quality research published on all the natural health products and use in PCOS for treatment of different symptoms. These products should be recommended on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your family physician, specialist(s), registered dietitian, and/or pharmacist.</p>

RELIGIOUS FOOD RESTRICTIONS	
<p>How do I balance between religious dietary restrictions e.g., fasting and my PCOS nutrition and health?</p>	<p>Some faiths do allow exemptions in terms of fasting which is based on the individual's medical health situation e.g., diabetes, pregnancy, health issues and symptoms and the duration of the fasting.</p> <p>In addition, feasting at the end of a fast, may elevate and/or exacerbate your health symptoms, such as elevate blood glucose and insulin levels. To help prevent this, consider meal planning and foods of high nutrition quality before and after a fast, and this may help minimize blood sugar spiking.</p> <p>Depending on your health status and your situation you may need to take the above factors into consideration. It is also recommended that you consult with both your faith practitioner and your family physician.</p>
LIFESTYLE	
<p>Why is a healthy "lifestyle" important when I have PCOS?</p>	<p>A healthy lifestyle is vital for all women with PCOS and is the best approach to reducing the severity of many PCOS symptoms.</p> <p>A healthy lifestyle includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Being as active as possible.</li> <li>● Eating a balanced, nutritional diet.</li> <li>● Not sitting for long periods by getting up hourly to move and stretch.</li> <li>● Stopping smoking and reducing alcohol consumption, if needed.</li> <li>● Maintaining body weight and avoiding weight gain, no matter where you're starting at.</li> </ul>
<p>What does having a healthy lifestyle help with? There must be more to it than just weight?</p>	<p>A healthy diet and lifestyle can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improve how you feel about your body</li> <li>● Make insulin work better and prevent diabetes</li> <li>● Make your periods more regular</li> <li>● Improve energy levels</li> <li>● Improve fertility</li> <li>● Improve fitness and muscle mass/tone</li> <li>● Improve mental health and emotional wellbeing</li> </ul>
<p>What are some healthy preventative things I can start to do to help prevent further weight gain and/or reduce weight?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitoring weight and/or waist circumference</li> <li>● Eat a balanced healthy diet</li> <li>● Pay attention to portion control</li> <li>● Incorporate protein sources into the diet, especially at breakfast</li> <li>● Reduce soft drink, fruit juice and sugar sweetened drinks</li> <li>● Replace "empty calorie" and processed foods with whole foods</li> <li>● Incorporate exercise or some sort of activity into your life every day. Exercise that raises your heart rate is recommended. For example, vigorous walking.</li> </ul>

WEIGHT LOSS & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING	
<p>I am having trouble losing weight, what do you recommend?</p>	<p>Many women with PCOS are at risk of having an unhealthy body weight (body mass index – BMI over 25) – BMI is calculated from weight (kg) / height x height (metres). BMI is used as a tool to categorize body weight for health recommendations. Body composition, your fat mass and lean mass (muscle) mass, are important factors in your total body weight.</p> <p>If you are an unhealthy weight aim to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitor your body weight and waist circumference regularly (if your comfortable to do so)</li> <li>● Seek the support of a health professional (family physician, dietitian)</li> <li>● Follow the healthiest lifestyle you can and aim to not gain more body weight</li> <li>● Be as active as you can</li> <li>● Reduce overall food intake if necessary, so that you are only meeting your energy requirements</li> <li>● Reduce intake of foods that are highly processed and have added sugars or ‘empty calorie’ foods</li> <li>● Monitor how your emotions may influence your eating patterns</li> </ul>
<p>How can I focus on weight loss without becoming obsessive over it?</p>	<p>Don’t focus on the weight you want to be. A small amount of body weight loss can make a big difference to your health. In general, our body weight is the result of many factors, some of which we don’t have direct control over. Try to focus instead on what you have more control over such as your eating habits and behaviour. Take a break from weighing yourself. Set small goals to make lifestyle changes. These small achievements will provide you with a sense of accomplishment and over time will add up to lifestyle changes that help with weight loss and well-being in the long-term.</p> <p>Women with PCOS have an increased risk of anxiety, depression, poor self-image, and low self-esteem. Try your best to be mindful of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Awareness:</b> Awareness, early action and a healthy lifestyle are the best ways to reduce this risk.</li> <li>2. <b>Monitoring:</b> Monitoring your emotional well-being is important to know when to take action.</li> </ol>
EXERCISE	
<p>I don’t like exercising, what are some easy things I can start doing everyday that will help?</p>	<p>Move at every opportunity!</p> <p>Take advantage of opportunistic activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take the stairs</li> <li>● Park further away</li> <li>● Walk to the shops instead of driving</li> <li>● Sit less, move more</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take a break from sitting for long periods by getting up and doing something else at regular intervals</li> </ul>
What are the exercise guidelines for PCOS?	<p>Any activity is good activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Light:</b> 40-50% of max heart rate – e.g., yoga, walking, dancing</li> <li><b>Moderate:</b> 55-70% of max heart rate - e.g., tennis, swimming, hiking</li> <li><b>Vigorous:</b> 70-90% of max heart rate – e.g., running, biking, exercise training</li> </ol>
How much activity is ideal for weight loss and/or maintenance?	<p><b>Weight maintenance for adult women:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>150+ mins/week Moderate activity OR</li> <li>75+ mins/week Vigorous activity OR</li> <li>a combination of both and include weight training 2x/week.</li> </ol> <p><b>Weight loss for adult women:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>300+ mins/week Moderate activity OR</li> <li>150+ mins/week Vigorous activity OR</li> <li>a combination of both and include weight training 2x/week.</li> </ol> <p><b>Adolescents:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60+ mins/day Moderate to Vigorous activity and include weight training 3x/week</li> </ul>
<b>FISH OIL</b>	
Is there anything I should be specifically looking for when choosing an omega 3 or fish oil supplement?	<p>Fish oil may help reduce blood fats or triglycerides which are a risk factor in heart disease. Fish oil contains long chain fatty acids (EPA and DHA) that help to lower blood triglycerides. The dose used in studies that lower blood triglycerides include approximately 2.5 g EPA and 1.6 g DHA/day. This dose equals about 6g/day of fish oil and will depend on the concentration of these fatty acids in a fish oil natural health product. Webber/ Equate/NutraSea are brands that we have used in clinical studies in PCOS.</p>
What vegan / vegetarian sources of EPA and DHA do you recommend?	<p>There are algae sources of these long chain fatty acids. There is limited scientific literature on the effectiveness of these sources at the dose needed to reduce blood triglycerides.</p> <p>Other patient partner recommendations include, NutraVege, Nordic Natural's Omega 3 and Freshfield's Vegan Omega 3.</p>
<b>HIRSUTISM</b>	
Is hirsutism/excessive hair growth normal for women with PCOS?	<p>Many women with PCOS say that excess body hair (hirsutism) is one of the more difficult symptoms to deal with. This may be because facial or body hair can be seen by others and because excess body hair challenges our idea of how girls and women should look. The good news is that treatments for body hair have improved greatly and are increasingly easy to find and less expensive.</p>

<p>What are some treatments of hirsutism/excess hair?</p>	<p>Waxing, threading, depilatory creams, plucking, laser hair removal and electrolysis can be useful ways to remove hair and reduce hair growth. Laser hair removal is now cheaper and more effective and a good option for many women.</p>
<p>Is there a pharmaceutical medication for hirsutism/excessive hair growth?</p>	<p>There are a few medications that may help to reduce excess body hair. E.g., anti-androgen medication, contraceptive pill. Speak with your family physician or get a referral to an endocrinologist to help with your choice of medication to treat excess body hair growth.</p>
<p><b>TESTOSTERONE</b></p>	
<p>What is considered high testosterone for women?</p>	<p>The upper normal limit for total testosterone for a female is 2 nmol/L.</p> <p>However, an endocrinologist examines all factors, not just the total testosterone value, as there are many other causes of high testosterone levels, not just PCOS.</p> <p>Not all PCOS patients have high total testosterone, but they may still have symptoms of high testosterone such as excess body hair growth and irregular cycles, so blood testosterone is not used alone to diagnose and treat symptoms of PCOS</p> <p>Evidence from research studies shows that some PCOS patients have normal androgens or testosterone levels but have an increased sensitivity to androgens or testosterone, so they develop symptoms of excess androgens.</p>
<p>When testosterone is too high how can it be lowered and is there a pharmacological intervention?</p>	<p>Testosterone in PCOS women can be high, low or normal and how it may affect symptoms in PCOS depends on the individual. The best advice is to speak with your family physician or referred endocrinologist who can help with treating symptoms of high androgens and may recommend anti-androgen medications.</p>
<p><b>ACNE</b></p>	
<p>Are there foods and drinks to avoid if prone to acne, eczema, and other skin conditions for PCOS patients?</p>	<p>Acne has many causes and trying to understand what foods or other causes impact your acne is important. For example, food allergies can cause acne.</p> <p>Try avoiding dairy products such as skim milk or 0%, as these are sometimes linked to causing acne in comparison to whole milk fat products.</p> <p>Also, any foods that spikes your blood sugar and raises your insulin may impact your testosterone levels which can contribute to acne.</p>
<p>What facial cleaners would you recommend for acne, eczema, and other skin conditions for PCOS patients?</p>	<p>Keep the face and/or other affected skin areas clean with a facial cleanser e.g., Cetaphil, has been recommended by some Dermatologists.</p>

<p>Is there a pharmaceutical medication for acne, eczema, and other skin conditions for PCOS patients?</p>	<p>Depending on the person's age, there are several medications that may help to reduce acne and other skin conditions. E.g., topical vitamin A preparations, oral contraceptive pill, estrogen with anti-androgen medication.</p> <p>Note, anti-androgen has been known to either exaggerate or make the acne better, so it is trial and error.</p> <p>You can also ask your family physician for a referral to a Dermatologist or Allergy/Immunologist.</p>
<p><b>HYPERPIGMENTATION</b></p>	
<p>Is there a link between PCOS and hyperpigmentation?</p>	<p>Yes, there is a link with PCOS and hyperpigmentation.</p> <p>The common one is called Acanthosis, which is a clinical sign of insulin resistance. People that have a very high level of insulin in the body and insulin resistance can have a thickening and velvety texture of the skin in a few areas e.g., around the neck area, under the arm area.</p> <p>Sometimes if the patient's insulin improves (through weight loss, exercising more and/ or eating a healthier diet) this can also improve their hyperpigmentation.</p>
<p><b>THYROID</b></p>	
<p>Are thyroid issues also linked to PCOS?</p>	<p>There is not a direct correlation with thyroid issues and PCOS.</p> <p>In the process of an endocrinologist establishing a diagnosis of PCOS, the thyroid hormone levels are checked. Many symptoms of PCOS are tied to different hormone abnormalities and can look somewhat like PCOS.</p>
<p><b>FERTILITY</b></p>	
<p>Is fertility a common problem for women with PCOS?</p>	<p>Yes, fertility and becoming pregnant is a common problem in PCOS. One of the main reasons why women with PCOS experience difficulties getting pregnant is related to ovulatory dysfunction.</p>
<p>How can I connect with a fertility specialist who understands PCOS?</p>	<p>In Edmonton there is a reproductive endocrinology unit at the Royal Alexandra Hospital which is covered by Alberta Health. There are also private fertility clinics.</p> <p>You require a referral from your family physician or endocrinologist to see a fertility specialist.</p> <p>A fertility specialist will establish if your fertility is related to PCOS or another health issue and/or if it is related to partner factors.</p>
<p><b>SPECIALISTS</b></p>	
<p>How do I get a referral to a specialist i.e., Endocrinologist, gynaecologist, dermatologist, allergist, fertility specialist?</p>	<p>Start with talking to your family physician and ask if they can refer you to an endocrinologist, gynaecologist or other health professional as needed.</p>

	Note: Some endocrinologists specialize in cardiovascular risk. Some gynaecologists are comfortable with treating fertility issues.
Is it worth pressing the issue for a referral when lifestyle is the main treatment?	To help you with diet and lifestyle factors, and hormone factors that may be impacting your PCOS symptoms asking for a referral to a specialist is important so that you get all the advice and help you need.
<b>REGISTERED DIETITIAN</b>	
How do I contact Letisha Hodges the Registered Nutritionist that spoke at the PCOS Together Online Community Forum on November 29, 2021?	Letisha Hodges, Registered Nutritionist Email: <a href="mailto:letisha@edgenutritiongp.com">letisha@edgenutritiongp.com</a> Website: <a href="http://Edge Nutrition &amp; Performance (edgenutritiongp.com)">Edge Nutrition &amp; Performance (edgenutritiongp.com)</a>
Do I need a referral to a Registered Dietitian?	No, you do not need a referral to see a Registered Dietician. Your family physician may be able to give you a referral to a Registered Dietician through a primary care network.
<b>PCOS TOGETHER RELATED TOPICS</b>	
How do I see my results from being in a PCOS Together study?	Go to: <a href="https://myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords">https://myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords</a> to access all your results. Your doctor or our study endocrinologist can also access your results to discuss them with you as needed. If results require medical attention, you would be contacted by one of our study clinicians: endocrinologist, cardiologist.
How do I take part in research studies in PCOS Together?	Yes, please visit our website <a href="https://pcos.together.ualberta.ca/">https://pcos.together.ualberta.ca/</a>
<b>If you have any other questions, please get in touch with us at <a href="mailto:PCOS.Together@ualberta.ca">PCOS.Together@ualberta.ca</a></b>	