

Managing PCOS

By Kate Marsh

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Management of PCOS has traditionally focused on treating individual symptoms such as acne, infertility or hirsutism. However we now know that improving insulin resistance through lifestyle changes, including diet, exercise and weight loss, can significantly improve all or most of the symptoms associated with this disorder, by reducing male hormone levels and restoring ovulation. This will also help to reduce the long-term risks of diabetes and heart disease.

Medication may also be needed but is only effective if used in combination with lifestyle changes. »



Lifestyle changes in women with PCOS, with even small amounts of weight loss (around 5-10 per cent of body weight), have been shown to:

- Reduce insulin levels • Improve menstrual function • Reduce male hormone levels
- Improve symptoms of hirsutism and acne • Restore ovulation • Increase fertility

The best type of eating plan for women with PCOS is one that is low in saturated fat and high in fibre and which includes carbohydrate foods that have a low glycemic index (see 'Eating for PCOS' below). This should be combined with regular exercise, aiming for at least 30-40 minutes of activity on most days. A combination of aerobic (such as walking, running or dancing) and resistance (using weights, resistance bands or body weight) exercise, as well as incorporating high intensity interval training, is likely to give the best results. A number of studies have now shown the benefits of both resistance and interval training for improving insulin sensitivity and fat loss.

Stress, lack of sleep and smoking may also worsen insulin resistance and have been linked with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Quitting smoking, learning to manage stress and improving your sleep habits should therefore also be part of any PCOS management plan. »



Eating for PCOS



- Limiting intake of saturated and trans fats by choosing lean meats & poultry, eating more fish and legumes, choosing low fat dairy products and avoiding high fat snack foods and fast foods.

- Choosing healthy fats from foods such as nuts, seeds, avocado, extra-virgin olive oil and fish.
- Basing meals around high-fibre, low GI carbohydrate foods including dense wholegrain bread, oats, barley, cracked wheat, buckwheat and quinoa and avoiding more processed grain foods including white bread, puffed/flaked breakfast cereals, most cracker biscuits and many snack foods.
- Balancing your plate at meals with half non-starchy vegetables and salads, one-quarter lean protein and one quarter low GI high fibre carbs, including wholegrains, legumes and starchy vegetables
- Eating small regular meals and snacks across the day and avoiding eating big meals to prevent large rises in blood glucose and insulin levels
- Choosing nutrient-dense snacks including fresh fruit, natural yoghurt with berries, a handful of raw nuts or hummus with raw vegetables in place of high fat/high sugar snack foods »



If you have PCOS and need help with your diet, see an Accredited Practising Dietitian who specializes in this area. Your APD will be able to develop an eating plan to suit your individual needs. To find an APD in your area visit the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) website www.daa.asn.au and look under 'Find an APD'.

Three recipes from Kate's PCOS recipe book follow this article.

For more information about PCOS:

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association of Australia
www.posaa.asn.au

The Jean Hailes Foundation for Women's Health
www.jeanhailes.org.au and www.managingpcos.org.au

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Kate Marsh is an Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian and Credentialed Diabetes Educator working in private practice in Sydney. She has a particular interest and expertise in the dietary management of PCOS, diabetes, insulin resistance and vegetarian nutrition.

Kate graduated with a Master of Nutrition and Dietetics from the University of Sydney in 1995 and completed a Graduate Certificate in Diabetes Education and Management in 1997. She has more recently completed her PhD looking at the effects of Glycemic Index (GI) in the diets of women with PCOS and is co-author of The Low GI Guide to Managing PCOS, The Low GI Vegetarian Cookbook, Low GI Gluten-Free Living and The Bump to Baby Diet.

Kate works with clients with type 1 and gestational diabetes, PCOS, and those following a vegetarian diet. As a diabetes educator, she can also offer diabetes education to people with newly diagnosed diabetes, or those needing review of their diabetes education and management.

Mixed Grain Porridge with Dried Fruit Compote & Yoghurt

from The Low GI Diet for Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome –
Brand Miller, Marsh & Farid; Hachette Australia 2011

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup dried apples
- 1/3 cup dried apricots
- 1/4 cup pitted prunes
- 4 cups water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3/4 cup rolled oats
- 3/4 cup rolled barley
- 200g low-fat vanilla yoghurt, to serve

Method:

1. Combine the apples, apricots, prunes, 1 cup of water, and the cinnamon stick in a medium-sized saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat, partially cover and simmer for 10–15 minutes, or until the fruit is soft. Discard the cinnamon stick and cool slightly.

2. Meanwhile, place the oats and barley in another medium-sized saucepan and add 3 cups of water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 3–5 minutes, stirring frequently, until creamy.

3. Spoon the porridge into serving bowls, top with the fruit compote and drizzle with some of the fruit cooking liquid. Add a dollop of yoghurt and serve immediately.

Cooking Tip

The compote can be made up to three days in advance. Refrigerate until required, then reheat, or serve cold. »



Balsamic Lamb With Sweet Potato Mash

from The Low GI Diet for Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome –
Brand Miller, Marsh & Farid;
Hachette Australia 2011

Preparation time: 10 minutes
(plus 6 hours for marinating)

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves, chopped
- 4 lamb loin chops, well-trimmed (about 150 g each)s
- 800 g sweet potato, peeled, cut into chunks
- 2 tablespoons low-fat milk or soymilk, warmed
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 teaspoons olive oil, extra
- ½ cup beef stock

To Serve:

200 g green beans, steamed
400 g small yellow squash, steamed

Method:

1. Combine the vinegar, extra-virgin olive oil, garlic, and rosemary in a shallow glass dish. Add the lamb and turn to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 6 hours or overnight to marinate.
2. Drain the lamb, reserving the marinade.
3. Cook the sweet potato until very tender. Drain well and mash until smooth. Add the milk and use a wooden spoon to beat until smooth. Season well with salt and pepper.
4. Meanwhile, heat the extra olive oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the lamb and cook for 4–6 minutes on each side, or until a thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the chop registers 60°C for medium-rare or 70°C for medium well done. Remove the lamb from the pan and set aside. Increase the pan heat to high and add the reserved marinade and the beef stock. Simmer for 2 minutes or until the sauce reduces and thickens.
5. Divide the mash among serving plates. Thickly slice the lamb and place over the mash. Spoon the sauce over and serve with the beans and squash. »

Three Bean Chilli with Spicy Tortilla Crisps

from The Low GI Diet for Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome –
Brand Miller, Marsh & Farid; Hachette Australia 2011

Preparation time: 20 minutes
(plus soaking overnight)

Cooking time: 50 minutes

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, peeled, finely chopped
- 1 stick celery, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 long red chilli, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon chilli powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 small red capsicum, deseeded, finely chopped
- 1 small green capsicum, deseeded, finely chopped
- 2 small zucchini, sliced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 400 g can red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup black-eyed peas, soaked overnight
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons chopped coriander



Spicy Tortilla Chips

- 4 purchased corn tortillas
- Olive oil spray
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon chilli powder »

Three Bean Chilli with Spicy Tortilla Crisps

Method:

- 1.** Heat the oil in a large heavy-based saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the onion, carrot, and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, for 6–7 minutes, or until the vegetables are slightly soft. Add the garlic, chilli, chilli powder, and oregano and cook, stirring, for 1–2 minutes, or until fragrant. Add the capsicum and zucchini and cook for 1 minute more.
- 2.** Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the chopped tomatoes and stock, and stir to combine. Add the black-eyed peas and beans. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to very low and simmer, covered, stirring frequently, for 30 minutes or until beans and vegetables are tender.
- 3.** Season, add lime juice to taste, and mix in the chopped coriander.
- 4.** To make the Spicy Tortilla Chips, preheat oven to 180°C. Spray both sides of each tortilla lightly with olive oil. Sprinkle with the paprika and chilli powder. Place the tortillas on a large baking tray and bake in the oven for 5–6 minutes, or until crisp. Cut into quarters and serve with the chilli.

Cooking tip:

You can use any spices on the tortillas, such as ground coriander, cumin, or cayenne pepper.

To buy Kate's book tap **HERE**