

# POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME FACT SHEET

*Also known as Stein-Leventhal Syndrome or chronic oligoanovulation.*

A condition of the hormonal system that can cause infertility in 4-12% of women. It means that instead of the ovarian-follicles releasing a developed egg at ovulation, a cyst is formed, trapping the underdeveloped egg inside the swelling follicle.

## **SYMPTOMS:-**

Sudden weight gain, facial hair and irregular menses, enlarged ovaries and ovarian cysts, acne, growth of body hair, high blood pressure, dandruff, baldness. Metabolic problems like high insulin levels obesity, high cholesterol and type II diabetes. Mental health issues such as depression anxiety bipolar and binge-eating. Long term PCOS also increases the risk of endometrial cancer and heart disease.

## **CAUSES:-**

No definite cause known, plenty of theories based around an imbalance of hormones. Women with PCOS show about twice the level of testosterone (a male steroid hormone naturally found in a woman's body) as other women, and they are often insulin-resistant. There are many research theories for PCOS. Some suggest it can be genetic passed on from mother to child, some think that the ovaries produce too much testosterone because the hypothalamus has abnormalities, some theorize that ovarian abnormality causes overproduction of testosterone, another shows that too much insulin can cause the ovaries to overproduce testosterone, and another idea is that PCOS itself is a side effect of insulin-resistance not the other way round. So it's complex and there are no definite answers available from the medical world yet.

## **HOLISTIC SELF-HELP IDEAS FOR PCOS:-**

### **WEIGHT LOSS:**

Exercising moderately and regularly is the first thing recommended (by doctors) to those experiencing PCOS symptoms, because the list of it's benefits are far-reaching and wide-ranging. Such exercise has been proven to help alleviate depression and anxiety, diabetes, endometrial cancer, and heart disease while weight loss has been medically proven to lower circulating testosterone levels, improve metabolism, and reduce all the PCOS symptoms. It's a no-brainer, it doesn't have to be boring, and you only need a 5% weight drop to regulate your hormones.

### **DIET:**

A vegan diet is often suggested to PCOS sufferers because it has been proven that it is conducive to weight loss. Rich in plant-based nutrition and beneficial plant proteins like beans and lentils the vegan diet easily provides the good sources of protein recommended with each meal. Increase foods with Omega 3 fatty acids such as cooking with rapeseed (canola) oil, eating more nuts and ground up seeds like flax, walnuts, chia, mustard and hemp. Increasing Vitamin A via well-cooked green red and orange foods is also beneficial. Avoid trans-fats because they interfere with hormonal signals throughout the body. Alisa Vitti who's entire work is based on how she overcame PCOS has named 5 foods other than sugar and dairy for PCOS sufferers to avoid; stevia, red meat, raw kale, 'cooling' foods like cucumber mint and spirulina, and soy.

### **ACUPUNCTURE:**

Often recommended by doctors, acupuncture is a very respected method of reducing testosterone production and regulating menses.

## **MENSTRUAL CYCLE AWARENESS WORK:**

By charting whatever cycle we have, we can learn how to observe our inner fluctuations, such as our emotions, energy levels, and physical body changes. If we respond to our inner changing rhythms we're actually putting less stress on our system as a whole. If our life is a little chaotic we can aim to bring a little more rhythm and routine into it. Things like regular meal times and sleep patterns can help, as well as planning for some 'down-time' and getting as much natural light as possible.

## **PHYSICAL:**

AVIVA Method, Deer Exercise and Maya Abdominal massage.

## **HOMOEOPATHIC REMEDIES:**

A homoeopathic doctor treats the whole person and not just their hormones and ovaries. Homoeopathy encourages the body to heal itself; it is not a quick fix but is an incredibly safe powerful mode of treatment for chronic conditions over the long term.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL:**

Dr Christine Northrup recommends that we look at any negative conditioning received as a child about being a fertile woman. By being mindful of these narratives and bringing light to these old messages we can work out if it's something useful or something to let go of. Also another idea of Susun Weed's to explore is our own feelings around whether we are too 'male-identified'; a problem she believes is common in modern cultures. Journaling about the above can be a really good tool to be used at different times of your cycle because your feelings will be different for example when you are pre-menstrual, and the conclusions will therefore be easier to come to.

## **AFFIRMATIONS:**

Recommended by Susun Weed are "I surrender to the sweetness of life." "I burst out of my bounds and venture all." and "I manifest my own inner wisdom for the good of all." The idea with affirmations is that you repeat them over and over, out loud if possible, until they become a mental habit.

## **MEDITATION:**

Secular meditation retreat (called Vipassana) can be a fascinating wonderful dive into the relationship with emotions and physical bodily sensations. 10 days long involving many hours per day in meditation, thinking about life from a deeper perspective, and in silence.

## **HERBS:**

Herbalist Susun Weed's recommendations in her article ([link below](#)) are Chaste Berry tincture (vitex) for it's strong effect on the reproductive system, Saw Palmetto for it's ability to regulate androgens (male sex hormones), dandelion tincture, and Fenugreek to help cells accept and use insulin. Shepherd's purse tincture can also help to control bleeding, and 3-6 quarts of nourishing herbal infusion (see resources for recipe). Another herb recommended to me by a PCOS sufferer is Shatavari which can balance the endocrine system and has the reputation of being a classic woman's herb.

## **AROMATHERAPY:**

Susun also recommends clary sage (10 drops), fennel (10 drops), geranium (7 drops), and rose (3 drops), diluted in two tablespoons of olive oil rubbed on the belly to help alleviate the pain of PCOS. Because of the strength of aromatherapy oils consider using them on a short term basis.

## **MEDICAL SOLUTIONS AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

**METFORMIN:** A commonly used insulin-assisting drug that helps to reduce testosterone, is beneficial with regards insulin, promotes ovulation, increases the chances of pregnancy, helps to prevent weight gain, and lessens extra hair growth.

**THE COMBINED CONTRACEPTIVE PILL:** It reduces male hormones, helps acne, regulates hormone production, and it has become an accepted option within the medical industry to regulate the menstrual cycle by artificial hormones and it works really well for lots of people.

**SURGERY:** A last-resort option involving ovarian drilling (a.k.a laparoscopy), oophorectomy, hysterectomy, or cyst aspiration.

**RESVERATROL:** New developments in research (as recent as 2016) has led to the discovery of a compound called resveratrol, found in grapes nuts and berries (and tiny amount in red wine!) that decreases testosterone production while positively affecting both insulin levels and insulin sensitivity. However, pills containing concentrated amounts of the compound are not certified yet. The keenest wine drinker might be a little disappointed to hear that they would need to drink about 1000 bottles of red wine per day to reach the suggested 1,500mg.

The views expressed in this fact sheet have been brought together from a wide range of sources, listed below. Many ideas presented are holistic taking into account the whole system of body and mind rather than focusing on individual symptoms alone; with the idea that 'one size doesn't fit all' and that everyone's body is different. However, diagnosis of PCOS has to be by a series of blood tests and pelvic examinations given by a medical practitioner, so if you feel you may be affected by PCOS definitely seek out medical advice.

## **SOURCES AND REFERENCES:-**

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