

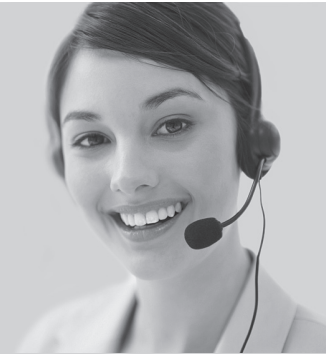
**Lifestyle Changes to Help Manage Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)**

“It was great to talk with you.

Thank you for your interest in ‘Lifestyle Changes to Help Manage Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS).’ I hope you find this tip sheet helpful.

Please give me a call if you have more questions about this or other topics.

As your UPMC Health Plan health coach, I’m ready to help in any way I can.”



Living with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is not easy. The good news is that lifestyle changes can go a long way toward limiting its effect on your health.

**About PCOS and How It Is Treated**

PCOS is a hormone imbalance in girls and women of childbearing age.

The signs of PCOS vary from person to person. Common ones include:

- Having no period after you have had one or more normal ones during puberty.
- Irregular periods. (They may come and go, be very light, or be very heavy.)
- Swollen ovaries with cysts (fluid-filled sacs).
- Body hair growing on your chest, belly, face, and around the nipples.
- Thinning hair on your head.
- Acne that gets worse.
- Dark skin in the creases around your neck, armpits, breasts, and/or groin.
- High levels of male hormones.
- High blood sugar and insulin levels.
- High blood pressure.
- High blood cholesterol.
- Overweight or obesity.

Women with PCOS are at greater risk of type 2 diabetes, diabetes during pregnancy, heart disease, stroke, and uterine cancer. They are also more likely to have trouble getting pregnant.

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## Lifestyle Changes to Help Manage Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

Treatments for PCOS include:

- Lifestyle changes (see below)
- Medicine to help you have normal periods, such as:
  - Birth control pills, which can also clear acne and reduce male hormone levels
  - Other hormone pills
  - Metformin, which also lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes
- Medicine to reduce the growth of excess hair, such as:
  - Birth control pills
  - Spironolactone pills (not for women who are pregnant or planning to get pregnant)
  - Eflornithine cream
- For permanent hair removal, electrolysis or laser hair removal
- Medicine to help you ovulate (if you are trying to get pregnant), such as:
  - Clomiphene citrate, which helps ovaries grow and release eggs
  - Metformin
  - Hormone injections
- Surgery to remove or alter an ovary (to help you get pregnant)

### Lifestyle Changes Can Make a Big Difference

Not all women with PCOS are overweight or obese, but many are. One of the best ways to help offset the effects of PCOS is to lose excess weight.

If you are overweight or obese, losing just 5%-10% of your weight can:

- Help balance your hormones.
- Make it easier to get pregnant.
- Lower your risk of heart attack, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and several types of cancer, including breast and uterine cancer.

That amount of weight loss is just 10-20 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds. The two keys to losing weight are to eat fewer calories through healthy eating and to be more active. Even if you are not overweight, healthy eating and physical activity can also help prevent heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and several types of cancer.

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## Lifestyle Changes to Help Manage Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

### 10 Tips for Healthy Eating

1. Eat a regular pattern of healthy meals and snacks. Eat something every 3 to 5 hours. At meals, make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Make  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate grains and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate lean protein foods. Drink a cup of nonfat or 1% milk or nonfat yogurt. Or eat a small slice of low-fat cheese. To lose weight, you may need to eat smaller amounts than this.
2. Make at least half your grains *whole* grains. Look for “whole” grain as the first ingredient. Limit white bread, cereals, pasta, or rice. Instead, choose whole-grain bread, cereals, pasta, and brown rice.
3. Eat plenty of fiber. Good sources include fruits and vegetables with edible peels; whole grains; small amounts of nuts or seeds; and cooked dried beans, split peas, and lentils.
4. Limit sugary foods and drinks. Examples are soft drinks, fruit drinks, 100% fruit juice (limit to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup per day), cookies, candy, cake, ice cream, and pastries.
5. Limit saturated fat. It is found in:
  - High-fat dairy products and foods that contain them (such as regular cheese, cheese pizza, cake, cookies, pies, pastries, ice cream, whole or 2% milk, cream, many pasta dishes, and butter)
  - Fatty meats and foods that contain them (such as sausage, hot dogs, bacon, ribs, hamburgers, processed meats, and many mixed dishes that contain meat or chicken)
  - Palm oil, palm kernel oil, coconut oil
6. Eat as little trans fat as you can. It is found in:
  - Foods with “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” oils on the ingredient list
  - Stick margarine (The softer the margarine, the less *trans* fat.)
  - Many snack and convenience foods (such as microwave popcorns, snack mixes, frozen pizza, refrigerated dough, ready-to-use frostings, nondairy creamers)
  - Shortening
  - Commercial baked goods
  - Fried or deep-fried foods
  - Fast foods



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## Lifestyle Changes to Help Manage Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

7. Replace saturated and *trans* fats with small amounts of oils. Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature. They are found in:
  - Vegetable oils, such as canola, corn, cottonseed, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, and sunflower oils
  - Avocados, nuts and nut butters, seeds, and olives
  - Some fish, such as salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel, and trout
  - Soft (tub or liquid) margarine with no *trans* fats
  - Mayonnaise and salad dressings that contain oil

Do not overdo it. Most adults need only between 4 and 6 teaspoons of oils per day. You may already eat enough oils, or too much, that are “hidden” in foods. Examples are oils in mixed dishes and baked goods. Like all fats, oils are high in calories, even in small amounts. Eating more than you need can contribute to weight gain.
8. Limit sodium to fewer than 2,300 milligrams per day. For a further reduction in blood pressure, eat fewer than 1,500 milligrams per day. To lower your sodium intake, eat out less often and limit processed foods. Flavor foods with herbs, spices, and non-salty seasonings instead of salt.
9. To lose weight:
  - Write down the calories and fat grams in everything you eat and drink.
  - Stay at a daily calorie and fat gram goal for weight loss. If you do not have one, ask your UPMC Health Plan health coach.
  - Eat a healthy diet, including foods that fill you up on fewer calories:
    - Good sources of fiber, which contains no calories. See item 4 above.
    - Foods that contain water. Examples are low-fat soups (broth-based, not creamed), fresh fruit, and vegetables.
10. If you become pregnant, talk with your doctor about the weight that is right for you. Also ask for an eating plan for pregnant women and for guidelines about being active.



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## Lifestyle Changes to Help Manage Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

### 10 Tips for Being Active

1. Choose activities you *like* to do. You are much more likely to stick with them!
2. Include aerobic activities, muscle strengthening, and moving throughout the day.
3. Slowly build up to at least 150 minutes of moderate (or 75 minutes of vigorous) aerobic activity per week. Or do a mixture of the two. Examples of moderate activity are brisk walking, swimming, and biking. Examples of vigorous activity are running and aerobic dancing.
4. Spread aerobic activity over the week and make each session last 10 minutes or more.
5. To lose weight and keep it off, you may need up to 300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week. Physical activity burns calories, which helps with weight loss. It is even more important for keeping off the weight you lose.
6. Do muscle strengthening activities at least twice a week. Ask your health coach or a personal trainer for guidance.
  - Examples are lifting hand weights, doing push-ups, or doing heavy gardening.
  - Include all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, arms).
  - Repeat the exercises for each muscle group 8 to 12 times per session.
7. Move as often as you can throughout the day. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park farther away from where you shop and walk to the store.
8. Sit less. Limit TV and computer time. Get up from the couch during TV commercials. At work, get up from your desk often. Walk around when you are talking on the phone.
9. Do you do strenuous exercise, such as running or competitive sports? Talk with your doctor. It may or may not be affecting your ovulation.
10. If you become pregnant, talk with your doctor about what exercises are right for you.



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## Lifestyle Changes to Help Manage Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

### Take Action

1. Choose one of the above tips for healthy eating and being active. Make a plan to put it into action in the coming week. *Be specific.*

For example: "On Saturday, I will buy brown rice and whole-wheat bread. I will try the brown rice for dinner on Sunday and make toast and sandwiches with the bread during the week."

My plan:

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2. Talk with your health coach for more information about losing weight, healthy eating, and being active. UPMC Health Plan has many resources and tools to help you.



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