

PCOS AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH: FINDING BALANCE THROUGH SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT

Written by Noy Phimphasone-Brady, PhD, Kaitlin V. Ross, PhD, & Abigail Attah Amoah

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a prevalent – yet under-recognized – endocrine disorder affecting approximately 8-13% of women of reproductive age worldwide. Beyond its physical manifestations, PCOS significantly impacts mental health, leading to challenges such as mood swings, anxiety, and body image issues. Understanding the mind-body connection, implementing effective behavioral strategies, fostering collaborative care, and engaging with support resources are essential for comprehensive management of PCOS.



THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION DURING MENSTRUAL CYCLES AND PCOS

The interplay between hormonal fluctuations and mental health is significant in both a typical menstrual cycle and among women with PCOS who experience irregular menstrual cycles. Research indicates that individuals with PCOS have higher likelihoods of mental health conditions compared with individuals without this condition, particularly depression, anxiety, bulimia, and bipolar disorders. These psychological manifestations are often exacerbated by physical symptoms of PCOS such as hirsutism, acne, and weight gain, which can negatively impact body image and self-esteem.

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING MOOD SWINGS, STRESS, AND SELF-ESTEEM

Managing the mental health challenges of PCOS can include a combination of lifestyle modifications and self-help strategies.



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Lifestyle Modifications

Engaging in regular physical activity and adopting a balanced diet can improve mental health symptoms. Studies have found that healthy lifestyle changes, combined with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), helped people with PCOS feel less anxious and depressed. Below are online resources for lifestyle change support in PCOS:

- **The PCOS Plan:** Offers dietary strategies to improve insulin resistance.
- **PCOS Diva (PCOSDiva.com):** Offers meal plans, lifestyle recommendations and mindset coaching for symptom management.
- **The PCOS Nutritionist Community (ThePCOSNutritionist.com):** Offers evidence-based lifestyle changes that is tailored towards women with PCOS.

Self-Help Books

- **The Body Image Workbook: An Eight Step Program for Learning to Like Your Looks:** Offers a step-by-step guide that helps individuals improve their body image and self-esteem through cognitive behavioral techniques.
- **A Workbook of Acceptance-Based Approaches for Weight Concerns the Accept Yourself Framework:** Utilizes mindfulness and acceptance-based strategies to foster healthier relationships with weight, eating habits, and body image.
- **PCOS SOS: A Gynecologist's Lifeline to Naturally Restore Your Rhythms, Hormones and Happiness:** Offers integrative medical approaches to managing PCOS symptoms.



Lifestyle and Wellness Apps

- **Flo:** A cycle tracking app that offers insight into hormonal health, lifestyle adjustments and emotional well-being.
- **Clue:** An app tracking symptoms, moods, and cycle irregularities, helping individuals better understand their hormonal patterns.
- **Headspace:** A mindfulness and meditation app that helps manage anxiety, stress and emotional regulation.
- **MyFitnessPal:** An app for tracking nutrition and fitness, helping in managing weight and insulin levels associated with PCOS.



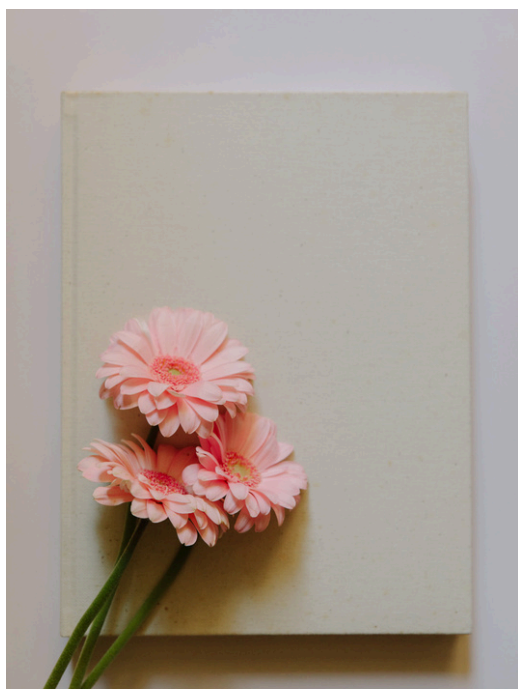
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FINDING THE RIGHT PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR COMPREHENSIVE PCOS CARE

In addition to lifestyle changes and self-care strategies for PCOS, identifying a multidisciplinary team of providers can help effectively manage the many symptoms of PCOS:

Multidisciplinary and Integrated Care Models:

Collaborative and multidisciplinary care involving OB/GYNs, endocrinologists, primary care providers, registered dietitians, and mental health specialists such as psychologists and psychiatrists should be available for all women with PCOS as it ensures comprehensive management of both the physical, psychological, and lifestyle aspects of PCOS. This approach facilitates personalized treatment plans addressing hormonal imbalances, metabolic issues, mental health concerns, and lifestyle and nutrition concerns. Incorporating brief mental health screenings into regular medical assessments for women with PCOS can lead to early identification and intervention for depression, anxiety, and other PCOS related concerns.



Evidence-based Psychotherapies:

Evidence-based psychotherapies, such as cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), are effective in reducing depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other mental health issues in PCOS.

Stress Management and Mindfulness Techniques:

Practices such as mindfulness-based therapy and acupuncture have been associated with reductions in anxiety and stress levels among women with PCOS. Self-compassion therapy could also reduce mood, anxiety, and body image concerns associated with the physical consequences of PCOS.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Access to support networks and educational resources plays a vital role in managing PCOS. Here are some local and national organizations offering support and evidence-based information:



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LOCAL SUPPORT IN COLORADO

CU Anschutz Multi-Disciplinary PCOS Program

The University of Colorado offers a comprehensive program dedicated to providing multidisciplinary care to individuals with PCOS with gynecologists, health psychologists, and registered dietitians. This program also established the first PCOS Community Advisory Board in Colorado. <https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/ob-gyn/patient-care/pcos-multi-disciplinary-program>

Children's Hospital Colorado PCOS Clinic

One of the first clinics of its kind, this program is geared specifically toward helping combat the day-to-day difficulties and adverse effects of PCOS in adolescents. <https://www.childrenscolorado.org/conditions-and-advice/conditions-and-symptoms/conditions/polycystic-ovary-syndrome-pcos/>

Side By Side Nutrition

Located in Colorado Springs and Fort Collins, this practice offers specialized nutrition therapy for individuals with PCOS, including support groups and holistic approaches.

<https://sidebysidenutrition.com/>

NATIONAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR)

SWHR is a national nonprofit organization and recognized leader with a mission to advance women's health through science, policy, and education. SWHR offers education, fact sheets, and advocacy strategies to combat misinformation and enhance empowerment in PCOS.

PCOS Challenge: The National Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Association

Serving over 55,000 members, this is the leading nonprofit support and advocacy organization advancing the cause for people impacted by PCOS globally. This association provides online support groups, webinars, and expert-led discussions on managing PCOS.

PCOS Awareness Association

This nonprofit organization aims to raise global awareness of PCOS and assist those diagnosed with the condition through educational services and support groups both online and in-person, for emotional and community support.

RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association

RESOLVE provides support groups and resources for individuals facing infertility, including those related to PCOS.



By acknowledging and addressing the mental health challenges associated with menstrual cycles and PCOS, women can be empowered to take proactive steps toward improved well-being. Through a combination of behavioral strategies, collaborative medical care, supportive resources, and evidence-based information, it is possible to mitigate the psychological impact of PCOS and enhance overall quality of life.



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CONTACT US:

WBHW@CUANSCHUTZ.EDU
303-724-1646
[WEBSITE](#)

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A WOMEN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BLOG | MARCH 2025