



# POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS) AND LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

**Making small, simple changes to your health behaviors and lifestyle overtime, like eating healthy, staying hydrated, being active, avoiding harmful substances, managing stress, and getting enough sleep, can help improve your health and well-being.**

**Trial and error is a part of the process to find what works for you as an individual. Medical support and intervention can compliment lifestyle changes.**

## WHAT IS LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION?

- Health behavior change means the process of getting motivated and taking action to stop unhealthy habits and start doing things that are good for your health.
- Efforts to make changes are influenced by a person's environment, including their culture, family values, neighborhood rules and resources, and responsibilities at work, school, or home.
- Research shows that getting personalized feedback and support, setting goals, and tracking progress can make it easier to successfully make changes.
- Self-monitoring is observing, tracking, and evaluating ones own behavior to increase awareness.

## HOW DO I MAKE LIFESTYLE CHANGES?

- First, identify what you would like to change.
- Figure out which specific behavior(s) you want to focus on changing.
- Identify the “how” – the approach that is likely to work for changing that behavior.
- Make a change plan!
- Attempt change, self-monitoring/tracking your behaviors along the way.
- Look at how well the change is working and the steps you took to make it happen. Consider any obstacles you faced, the changes you made, and the benefits and costs of those changes.



# AMBIVALENCE AND DECISIONAL BALANCE



Scan for PCOS  
resource links

- Ambivalence is the state of having mixed feelings about something.
- Ambivalence about lifestyle modifications/health behavior change can get in the way of taking steps toward change and maintaining change.
- One way to explore ambivalence about change is by using a decisional balance tool provided here.
- If you decide you want to make a change, you can also ask yourself:  
What is the most important reason I want to change?

## YOUR TURN! TRY THIS DECISION TO CHANGE EXERCISE

Fill in the costs and benefits of changing and not changing. Complete them and ask yourself, are the costs worth it?

	CHANGING	NOT CHANGING
BENEFITS OF		
COST OF		



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# SMART GOAL SETTING

Once you decide to make a lifestyle modification, setting your goal(s) is important to the process of working toward the goal(s), and using this format can help!

**S**

**SPECIFIC (DESCRIBE YOUR GOAL)**

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**M**

**MEASURABLE (HOW CAN YOU TRACK PROGRESS?)**

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**A**

**ACHIEVABLE (IS THIS POSSIBLE? HOW?)**

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**R**

**RELEVANT (DOES THIS GOAL ALIGN WITH THE BIGGER PICTURE?)**

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**T**

**TIMELY (WHAT IS THE DEADLINE?)**



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# RECOMMENDED LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS FOR PCOS

## Nutrition Recommendations


There is no one specific diet that is best for persons with PCOS. People may hear about trying a low carbohydrate, or high protein, or low fat, or gluten or dairy free diet, but none of these approaches has been proven to be more effective. Instead, we encourage you to follow a diet that is best for your lifestyle, food preferences, dietary and nutrient needs for long term sustainable health and wellness.

Although weight loss through calorie restriction is often prescribed, this is not the path we advocate for our patients with PCOS. Weight is not a health behavior and a sole focus on calorie restriction for weight reduction can often lead to more harm in the long run. Calorie restrictive diets are unsustainable and set a person up for failure and disordered eating patterns. We instead want you to focus on health behaviors for improved symptoms and a well-rounded lifestyle.

## Tip: Consider the credibility of influencers and be wary of extreme approaches to weight loss

With that in mind, there are a few key guidelines to implement for optimal wellness and managing your risk for conditions such as insulin resistance/sensitivity, metabolic syndrome, type II diabetes, and cardiovascular disease which pose a greater risk for those with PCOS.


## Balanced Meals and Snacks



When choosing a meal or snack it helps to look at what you choose/desire and consider if it needs to be modified for better balance. A balanced meal is one that includes protein, fat, carbohydrates, and fiber. Combining these nutrients will help in managing your blood sugars and keep you feeling energized and full longer than a meal or snack that is lacking in one or more of these nutrients. Examples could include: berries or any whole fruit, nuts/nut butter, crackers - look for ones with more fiber.

If you are craving chocolate add that to satisfy your desire or swap in chips for crackers if that is what you yearn for. It is okay to honor your food desires but in a way that will also nourish your body. When you eat in this manner, you can keep your body optimally fueled so that it is able to perform at its best throughout your day. Cutting out food groups or depriving yourself of your favorite foods will only lead to feeling deprived which often results in a backlash of bingeing later on.

## Healthy Fats



Omega-3 fats provide a variety of health benefits that are essential for improving heart health and may improve other symptoms of PCOS. Dietary sources include salmon, tuna, sardines and nuts/seeds such as flax, chia and walnuts. These are termed essential fats – meaning that your body is unable to create them and thus are needed as part of a balanced diet.

Additional health benefits of Omega 3 Fats: Lowers triglycerides and androgens, improves mood, reduces inflammation, improves egg quality and ovulation, improves non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.



# RECOMMENDED LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS FOR PCOS

## Move Your Body: Physical Activity

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and 2 days of muscle strengthening activity each week. Any type or amount of movement you can include in your day is beneficial for your health. Even short bouts of 10 minutes are effective at improving insulin sensitivity. For many people the idea of scheduling consistent days/times for dedicated activity feels very difficult. Instead, find short openings during your day to move your body in a way that feels good for you.

Discover what activities bring you joy and how they can be most easily incorporated into your life! Consider brisk walking during a lunch break or while waiting for an appointment, use the stairs, park farther from your destination, gardening, housework, stretching, dance, yoga, swimming, biking, strength training. Every step and movement counts – the less you sit the better this is for your body.

## Strength Training

Research with people with PCOS or those with similar symptoms has found positive results of resistance/strength training on health outcomes, including decreasing central obesity, and improving: hormonal balance, insulin resistance, glucose metabolism, resting metabolic rate, self-esteem, and depression.

Getting Started with Strength Training:

- Consider beginning with resistance bands or bodyweight resistance exercises
- To avoid injury, consult with online resources or a trainer to learn proper form
- Build in time for rest and recovery of muscles
- Track your progress and development
- Notice the benefits of increased strength in your daily life

## Vitamin D - Sunlight

Vitamin D is most readily available through sunlight exposure and a person can obtain their needs in as little as 15 minutes of being outside in bright daylight. Going on walks can help improve your mood while also getting some vitamin D. Vitamin D is fat soluble meaning it will absorb best if taken with a meal that contains fat. Vitamin D may help lower androgens, promote normal insulin production, lower lipids, and lower inflammation.

## Sleep

Quality sleep is incredibly important for overall health and well-being. Being tested for obstructive sleep apnea is recommended if snoring is present. Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is associated with daytime sleepiness, hyperactivity, behavioral problems, difficulty with attention/focus, and irritability. In addition, it is associated with an increased risk for high blood pressure and diabetes. Poor sleep can make it harder to lose weight and contribute to fatigue and depression. Risk factors for obstructive sleep apnea include large tonsils and/or adenoids, chronic nasal congestion, being overweight (elevated BMI) and narrow/crowded airway. Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) treatment is often beneficial for OSA. Practicing good Sleep Hygiene can also improve sleep quality and overall health. Find some helpful sleep hygiene tips here: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene>.

