

PCOS NEWS

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New Staff!

The PCOS Study welcomes a new member to its team!

Jennifer Marsh will be taking over for Shamali as the Research Assistant for the study. You will likely hear from her in the next few weeks, but don't hesitate to drop her in the mean time to introduce yourself.

She can be reached at 416-351-3800 ext 2714 or via her email at jennifer.marsh@swchsc.on.ca.

It's A Boy!



On September 9th at 7:12 Baby Reece came into the world at a healthy 6-lbs, 10-oz. Mom and baby are "resting" comfortably at home.

Where did Shamali go?

Some of you may already know that Shamali has left the research unit. She has returned to the University of Toronto to pursue her Masters' Degree in Health Economics. We wish her the best in her studies!



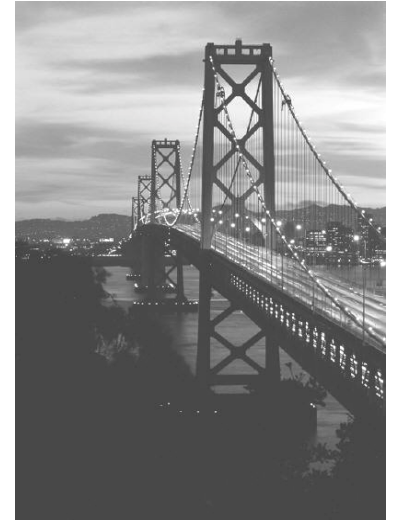
WELLNESS TIP

Try the new sugar substitute called Splenda (sucralose). It's been approved by the FDA after a 20-year study that found the sweet alternative safe for everyone including pregnant women and diabetics. It's now being distributed in grocery stores in packet form. Unlike aspartame, sucralose can be used in cooking and baking without breaking down.

Medical Forum

Medical Forum

Sheila Laredo, MD



NOTES FROM SAN FRANCISCO

I had the opportunity to be in San Francisco in June for the annual Endocrine Society meeting. This is the largest endocrinology conference of the year internationally.

There were many exciting presentations, and I thought I would take the opportunity to present to you some of the interesting information I learned about PCOS. This is by no means a comprehensive review of all the new PCOS research, but it includes a couple of the items I thought may be of interest to you as participants in the PCOS Diet & Exercise Study.

Diet Composition

This first item serves as a nice update on the high-carb vs. lower carb question that I addressed a couple of months ago. Dr. Robert Norman is an investigator in Australia who is interested in the impact of lifestyle of PCOS, and his group recently conducted a randomized trial on two different diets. In this study, they assigned women to receive a low protein (15% protein, 55% carbohydrate – similar to the diet we are using for our study) or high protein (30% protein, 40% carbohydrate) diet. Note that both of these diets contained 30% fat – this is probably not typical of traditional “low carb” diets, which are higher in fat. Women in both groups ate about 1,500 calorie diets for 12 weeks (for weight loss) followed by 1,800 calorie diets for weight maintenance for the next 4 weeks.

Women in both groups lost the same amount of weight and body fat, and reduced blood sugar and insulin levels. Both groups had equivalent improvements in menstrual regularity and ovulation. This study, although small (28 women finished the study), indicates no clear benefit for a lower carbohydrate/higher protein diet. It is likely that the benefit of diets relate to overall calorie intake and weight loss, rather than to the amount of protein and carbohydrate. This study is also fairly short term (less than 4 months total time), and to answer these questions definitively, more long-term studies are required.

Genetics

More and more researchers are interested in looking at family members of women with PCOS to determine whether these relatives (men and women) may have common features with the women. As you know, women with PCOS often have insulin resistance. At least 2 studies presented at the conference indicated that relatives of women with PCOS are themselves more likely to have higher insulin, and more insulin resistance. When the relatives are sisters, they are more likely to have higher insulin if they themselves also have symptoms (either excess male-pattern hair or irregular menstrual cycles). Family members of women with PCOS are probably also more likely to have impaired glucose tolerance (“borderline” diabetes) or diabetes. Therefore, it was suggested that family members of women with PCOS undergo screening for symptoms of PCOS and abnormalities of blood sugar.

Causes of PCOS – does it start before puberty, or even in the womb?

Tune in to another newsletter for more on this!!

Questions and Answers about Nutrition and Weight Loss

by Vanessa R. Speers, M.Sc.

Q. I can't seem to stick to a diet. I get so depressed all the time and food seems to comfort me. I eat because I'm unhappy and I'm unhappy because I eat. Do you have any ideas of what I could do? I need your help badly!

A. Too often, we eat in response to feeling depressed, stressed, bored, anxious, or lonely. But there are ways to decrease the urge to binge on high-calorie foods when experiencing these feelings, which are serving as food triggers. The best way to do this is to get at the root of the problem: that is, get at the root of what's eating you.

Below are some tips on coping with different feelings, which will help you avoid the urge to binge:

Depression Indeed, feeling depressed over an external or internal event can cause us to overeat. The best thing to do if you are feeling depressed is to speak with a mental health professional. He or she will be able to discuss your problem with you, and will be able to help you focus on coping. Exercise can help too—research shows that exercise helps to boost our endorphins, or “feel-good” hormones, ultimately improving our mood. The important (although difficult) thing to recognize is that overeating in response to feeling down can cause us to feel worse.

Stress or Anxiety Overeating in response to stress or anxiety can create more stress, especially as the number on the scale increases! If you tend to overeat when you feeling anxious, take time to stop and think about what is causing the anxiety. Is your husband driving you crazy? Are you awaiting a reimbursement in order to pay a bill? Do you have too much to do and too little time? Whatever it is, identify what is causing the anxiety, and think of realistic solutions. A solution that will immediately “take the edge off” is heading outside for a quick run (or walk) around the block.

Boredom If you tend to overeat when you're feeling bored, ask yourself which time of day this usually occurs. Does it occur at night when you're flipping through television channels? On a Sunday afternoon when waiting for the laundry to be done? Depending on the time period, think of an activity you can do when you are bored, such as taking a walk, or going shopping. Don't forget, logging on to the PCOS listserv is always an option!

Anger If you are feeling angry, and overeating in response, ask yourself why. Did someone lie to you or hurt your feelings? Did you not get promoted at the job? If this is the case, turn the energy from your anger into positive energy. A good way to think of it is like this: Someone has hurt you, (your boss or your friend) so why should you give them the power to have control over your eating habits? Haven't they done enough harm already? Keeping these words in mind can help you cope with your anger, and can prevent you from bingeing.

Loneliness Treat loneliness as you would treat boredom—that is, be sure to plan for times when you are most likely to feel lonely. Arrange activities to do with friends ahead of time. If the loneliness occurs suddenly, pick up the phone and call a friend. If no one is around, turn on the television or radio, or log onto the PCOS listserv. Remember, our caring community is here to help you along your journey!

Advice for Being Carbohydrate Savvy

Go for Whole and Natural

Whole, natural foods have a lower GI than more refined foods. Choose an apple instead of apple juice, brown rice instead of white, whole wheat pasta instead of instant noodles. For grains, the cooking time also affects the GI. Pasta cooked al dente, for example, has a lower GI than mushy pasta.

Pay Attention to Serving Sizes and Timing of Meals and Snacks

Eat small meals or snacks every two to four hours instead of only three large meals. Aim for three to four different groups at a meal, and at least two different food groups at a snack. To avoid an overload of carbohydrate, don't eat more than two or three grain product servings or two fruit servings at one time. For example, 1 to 1 ½ cups of pasta is sufficient for a meal. More than 1 cup (250-ml) of fruit juice at a meal or snack is excessive.

Eat in Combinations

The GI is most relevant when a good is eaten alone. To minimize the glycemic effect, eat carbohydrate foods with protein or as part of a balanced meal. For example, eat fruit with cottage cheese or yogurt. Eat whole grain bread with nut butter or an egg. Eat pasta with fish, poultry or meat, a healthy serving of vegetables, and a glass of milk.

For more information on carbohydrates and the Glycemic Index, ask Christine more about it at your next appointment.



The Pleasure of Friendship

Vanessa R. Speers, M.Sc.

I have often heard people say, "I don't want to be a burden to my friends," or "My friends have their own problems and wouldn't want to hear mine," or "Their lives are going so well that they couldn't possibly understand my problems." I have been told, "I don't want advice," or "I don't want anyone to know." If you remember thinking or saying such things, ask yourself whether you are choosing to cut yourself off from the most precious benefit of friendship - the pleasure of being able to freely disclose some of your deepest thoughts and feelings to someone who accepts and values you.

Studies have shown that the way we see our friendship network is an important factor in helping us cope with stress and recover more quickly from illness and bereavement. However, in order to experience these benefits, we need true friendships, not just acquaintances. Our willingness to risk some openness about our feelings and experiences determines the difference between friendships and acquaintances.

It is a good idea to evaluate the quality of your friendship network. Are you satisfied with the number of friends that you have? Do you have an overall balance of people who support you and people who require more support than they can give? It's fine to have some friends and acquaintances in your life that are, perhaps temporarily, taking more than they can give. But if there are many people in your life who are like this, then it's no wonder you feel exhausted or sad or lonely. You could consider whether there are any relationships you might wish to limit or discontinue. If there are not nearly enough people in your life, you might consider placing a high priority on building new friendships.

While you are considering potential friends, it is useful to examine your definition of "friend". Some people develop a very narrow idea of who is suitable for friendship. Try to keep an open mind. If you like someone and enjoy his or her company, it's possible to have a friendship despite some differences of age, lifestyle, or interests.

If you have felt hurt or betrayed or abandoned by friends in the past and have given up on friendship, I encourage you to try again. Take determined action to find the friends that you need. Friendships are too important to leave to chance, and the world is full of potential friends just waiting to be discovered.



TEN STEPS TO MAKING & KEEPING FRIENDS

STEP 1

Go to places where you can meet others and identify those you are interested in.

STEP 2

Make initial contact, and show your interest. Ask questions.

STEP 3

Extend an invitation for coffee or lunch.

STEP 4

Take responsibility for initiating more than 50 percent of the contacts.

STEP 5

Be willing to take small risks. Reveal something about yourself and evaluate whether the person is willing to share in return.

STEP 6

Assess whether the other person is taking some responsibility for initiating contact with you.

STEP 7