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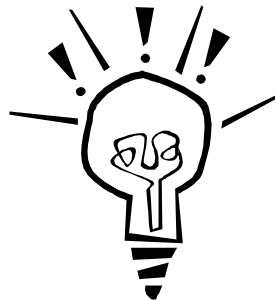
# PCOS NEWS

**NEXT SUPPORT  
GROUP  
MARCH 28<sup>TH</sup>**

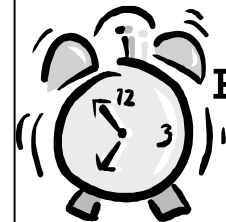
The PCOS Lifestyle Study conducted its first support group meeting this month with resounding success. An informative and supportive evening was enjoyed by all. Highlights included a viewing of the program produced by TVO, an informational session, complete with question and answer period hosted by Sheila Laredo, and a guest appearance by Dr. Mary Hannah, Director of the Maternal, Infant, and Reproductive Health Research Unit.

Please mark your calendars for Wednesday March 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 pm for the next meeting of your support group. The group will meet in room 2007 in the Athletic Centre at the University of Toronto. Please RSVP as soon as possible to one of the study staff.

## HAVE A QUESTION, SUGGESTION, OR IDEA?



We at the PCOS Lifestyle Study are interested in what you think. If you have a comment or question about any aspect of the study, or PCOS in general, send your question or comment to the study office via one of the contacts listed on the left. Frequently asked questions (FAQ's) may spur an additional column to this newsletter.



## RUNNING LATE?

An appointment made with the study staff is time that is reserved especially for you to look after your needs. If you are unable to keep an appointment, we ask that you notify us 24-hours in advance so that the time can be offered to someone else. We understand that situations arise - please keep us informed with a phone call of your situation or if you will be 5 to 10 minutes late. Your cooperation is appreciated and will help to ensure that the study runs efficiently and you are seen on time.

## PCOS MEDICAL FORUM

Sheila Laredo, MD

Hot Off the  
Press...

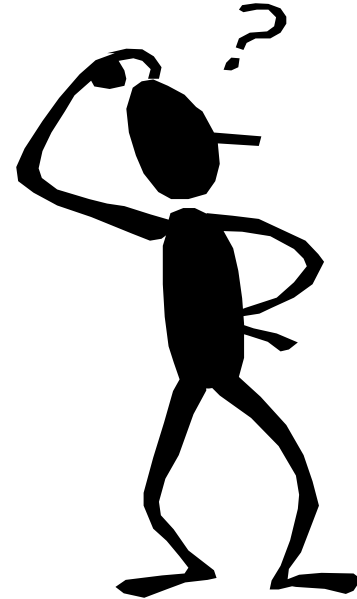
I was planning on providing research information on treatment of PMS symptoms since a few women have noticed these symptoms since starting the study, and there are non-drug approaches. But as I was about to start writing, I noticed a hot-off-the-press article I was intrigued by, and thought you would be interested in. This article was published in the February 1, 2001 monthly medical periodical, Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, a well-respected journal, which frequently publishes research on PCOS.

The article by A.N.Vgontzas is entitled, "Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Is Associated with Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Daytime Sleepiness: Role of Insulin Resistance". What does this mean?

Obstructive Sleep Apnea, or OSA, is a condition in which people, usually men, stop breathing for short periods of time due to obstruction of the airway by soft tissue in the throat, many times in the course of a night. This results in snoring, multiple awakenings to re-open the airway (which may not be recalled), and excessive daytime sleepiness. The lack of oxygen, on and off during the night, increases the workload of the heart, and is thought to result in increased risk of heart disease. People with OSA are more likely to have abnormal cholesterol profiles and hypertension as well. Daytime sleepiness is thought to increase the risk of car accidents in those suffering from OSA.

OSA can be diagnosed in a sleep lab, where the patient's sleep is monitored overnight. It has been recognized that those who are overweight are more likely to have OSA, although obesity is not a prerequisite. Insulin resistance is more likely to be seen in those with OSA. Leptin is a hormone that inhibits appetite, and leptin resistance is thought to exist in people with OSA. One study has demonstrated that leptin levels can be normalized when the OSA is medically treated. This may have implications for weight control in these people.

## WHY AM I ALWAYS SO TIRED?!



*So, why should you care?*

It turns out that this recent study published earlier this month finds that women with PCOS are 30 times more likely to have OSA than control women (17% vs. 0.6%), and are more likely to complain of daytime sleepiness. Women who were more insulin resistant were more likely to have OSA, even when taking body mass into account.

It is conceivable that daytime sleepiness affects quality of life, appetite and ability to function optimally. OSA can be treated with simple weight loss, but also with appliances that help to maintain the airway open while the person is sleeping at night. Keep in mind of course that we all live busy lives, and just because you feel fatigued from time to time doesn't mean that you have OSA. In the study, 80% of women with PCOS complained of sleepiness, even though only 17% had the actual sleep disorder!

# CHRISTINE'S CORNER

Christine Mehling, MSc


## Dissecting a Food Label: What does it all mean?

Part 1 of 2

Reading food labels can provide you, the consumer, with a lot of information to help in the selection of a healthier way of eating. Nutrition information is located in one of three different places: in a nutrition claim, under the nutrition information or in the ingredient list.

**Nutrition Claims:** Sometimes products will indicate whether they are high in dietary fibre, low in fat, or low in cholesterol. The company does this to highlight a key nutrition feature of the food. It is often put on the front of a package label in big, bold type. If a claim is made, detailed information on that nutrient must also be given somewhere on the package label. The government sets rules for the use of nutrition claims, so what the claim states is true. But, confusion can still arise, unless the consumer understands what the claim means. For example "Cholesterol free" does not mean fat free. Vegetable oils often state that they are cholesterol free. Animals produce cholesterol, not plants, thus only animal products contain cholesterol. Therefore, it is not surprising that vegetable oil is cholesterol free, but it does not mean that vegetable oil is fat free. Other confusing terms are "light" or "lite". Consumers often think when they see these claims that the product is light in calories and/or fat content, which may be true, but the term could also be referring to the product's texture or taste. Products claiming that they contain 50% less fat than before are not necessarily low in fat either. It all depends on how much fat the product had in the first place. Nutrition claims that will help you to find low fat and high fibre products are as follows: "low in fat or low fat" (the product contains less than 3 grams per serving), or "high or very high in dietary fibre" (the product contains greater than 4 (high) or 6 (very high) grams per serving).

**Ingredients:** Are listed in order of priority based on weight versus volume. Have a look at the example of the cereal label shown in this article; whole wheat, is the first product on the list, which means that whole wheat was used in the largest amount in this product. You may notice the names of vitamins and minerals on the list. Those have been added to the product. Try to choose products that contain whole grains as often as possible. A good rule of thumb is to choose the product with the least number of ingredients on the list. This suggests that it has had the least amount of processing. Try to minimize the foods that contain sources of saturated fat. Be on the lookout for words such as lard, hydrogenated vegetable oil, vegetable oil shortening. These ingredients are just different forms of "saturated fat". If you want to minimize the amount of added sugar to your diet, be on the lookout for products that contain sugar, glucose, fructose, liquid invert sugar and syrup. These different ingredients are all just different types of added sugar.



**Nutrition Information:** Found on the side panel, the nutrition information provides detailed nutrition information based on the suggested serving size. Let's have a closer look at what each of these terms means.

**Serving Size:** Tells you the size of serving for which the nutrition information is provided. Be Careful! While the information provided is accurate, if you eat more or less than this amount, the nutrients will be accordingly more or less. Your perception of what a portion size is and what the recommended portion size actually is may not be the same. For example, next time you reach for a small bag of chips (40-50 grams) (which is hopefully not too often!) look at the label. Most people would consider this a single serving, but it actually isn't. A single serving is two thirds of the bag. Therefore, if you eat the whole bag (which most people do) you have to add an extra 33% on to the calorie level and fat content.

**Energy:** is the calories per serving. It is also given in metric units, which is kilojoules (KJ)

**Protein:** describes the amount of protein in the product.

**Fat:** shows the amount of total fat in the product per serving. You may or may not find a breakdown of the fat content into the various different kinds of fat found in the food such as polyunsaturated, monounsaturated and saturated fat. The total fat value is the most important number that you should pay attention to. You may also want to keep a special eye open for the saturated fat content. A high saturated fat content in the diet may increase cholesterol levels and increase the risk for heart disease. Depending on the product, the information about the percent fat may be provided. Try to choose products that are less than 30% fat.

**Carbohydrate:** includes the content of sugars, starch and fibre. Depending on the product you may only get information on one of the type of carbohydrate. A high fibre product should have at least 4 grams of fibre per serving.

**Sodium:** is a measure of the amount of salt in the food

**Percentage Recommended Daily Intake:** is the way in which vitamins and minerals are listed. If you are interested in any one nutrient, the information may be useful to you.

**Next Month:** Using food labels to help you follow a low-fat diet, determining the percentage of fat calories in food products, and an easy 3-step method to help you put all the information together.

## MOTIVATIONAL MATTERS... ...TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Lifestyle changes, particularly developing a consistent exercise routine can be especially difficult in the course of your busy day. Try some or all of these hints to help make your transitional changes a means to a healthier life.

**❶ Set specific long- and short-term exercise goals.** The long-term goals don't have to be realistic right now, but a long-term goal you can eventually reach can be a good incentive. Plan shorter-term step-by-step goals that you can attain and that will bring you closer to your ultimate goal. Be flexible with your daily goals - avoid all-or-none thinking; if you miss a workout, all is not lost.

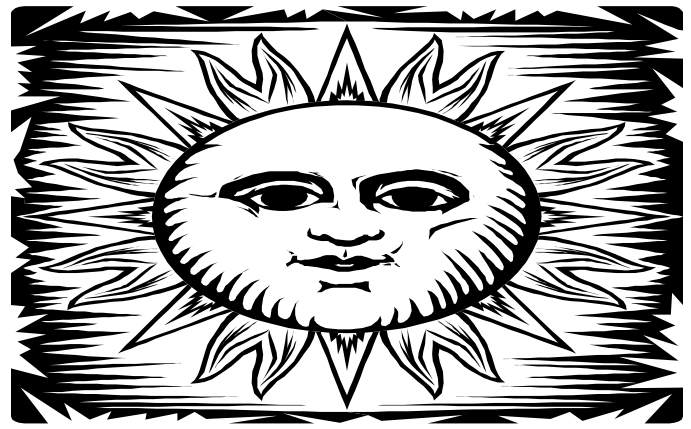
**❷ Enter in for the long haul.** Don't expect a quick fix; for instance, if you're becoming more physically active to lose weight, stay off the scales for the first month. Realize that it typically takes 10 to 20 weeks of consistent physical effort to show a noticeable fitness gain. Expecting too much too soon will only frustrate you - be patient.

**❸ Make physical activity fun.** It doesn't have to be a workout. If exercise is "too hard" or "no fun", then make it fun. Walk and talk with a friend. Do something active that you enjoy. You don't have to suffer though physical activity to improve your health.

**❹ Motivate yourself through rewards.** If you aren't motivated to carry out good intentions to exercise just by knowing the fitness and health benefits, pick rewards that are more important to you and make a personal commitment to not indulge yourself until you meet your daily exercise goal - for example, no reading the newspaper until you've exercised. Following through on this will reduce your guilt and make both activities more enjoyable. Keep a chart of your promises so you can't conveniently forget them or lie to yourself when you don't keep them.

**❺ Schedule your workout.** Schedule your workout. Pick a time and place. Things that aren't scheduled often aren't accomplished. Many people find exercise at lunchtime or at the end of the day invigorating. Others feel too tired by the end of the day; these people should schedule their exercise earlier - perhaps first thing in the morning. Keep in mind that good intentions often weaken by day's end. Make exercise a top priority by actions, not just words.

**❻ Involve your friends and family.** Find a buddy. Make a commitment with a friend who shares your interests. Substitute an active leisure choice for a passive one; meet a friend for a bike ride instead of lunch. People often keep commitments they make to others when individually, they would let themselves down.



*Vanessa R. Speers, MSc*

**❼ Make it difficult to not exercise.** Engineer your environment so it is difficult to talk yourself out of exercising. Put exercise equipment beside your bed at night so it's the first thing you see when you wake up in the morning. Keep workout clothing in your car, apartment, or house so you can't say "I don't have it with me" when a workout opportunity arises. Put exercise signs or cartoons on your door or on the refrigerator. When you have second thoughts, take the first step; this usually leads to another. You can always decide to stop after you start moving - but you usually won't.

**❽ Exercise to feel better.** Don't judge the benefits of exercise by fitness gains alone. Exercise will enhance your health and make you feel better. Exercise doesn't just add years to your life - it adds life to your years. This enhanced quality of life may be the key to sustaining an active lifestyle. Exercise should make you feel better. If it doesn't, change it until it does.

**❾ Try something new.** Seek pleasure. Try different activities and pick those you enjoy, and do them in places you enjoy. The type of exercise you do and when you do it are much less important than the time you spend doing it. Once you start moving, you can try other less enjoyable but healthful activities. They can become rewarding later. Having options reduces the chance that you will relapse if vacation, illness, or other interruptions break into your favorite routine.

**❿ Finish workouts feeling good.** Choose an intensity that allows you to feel at least as good as when you started. Remember, you'll still receive most of the health benefits from exercise when you exercise in shorter, repeated bouts (e.g. three 10-minute walks) rather than one single long constant paced lower intensity walk. So pick a type of exercise you enjoy, a time that best fits your schedule, and an intensity that allows you to enjoy the exercise and feel good when you finish.