

JUNE/JULY 2001
ISSUE 7

Study Staff

Project Director

Sheila Laredo, MD
416-351-3800 ext 2721
sheila.laredo@swchsc.on.ca

Physiologist & Coordinator

Vanessa Speers, MSc
416-351-2536
vanessa.speers@swchsc.on.ca

Registered Dietitian

Christine Mehling, MSc
416-760-8778

University of Toronto
Maternal, Infant and
Reproductive Health
Research Unit

at

The Centre for Research
in Women's Health

790 Bay Street, Suite
719
Toronto CANADA M5G 1N8

Tel 416-351-2536
Fax 416-351-3771

vanessa.speers@swchsc.on.ca
www.utoronto.ca/miru/pcos

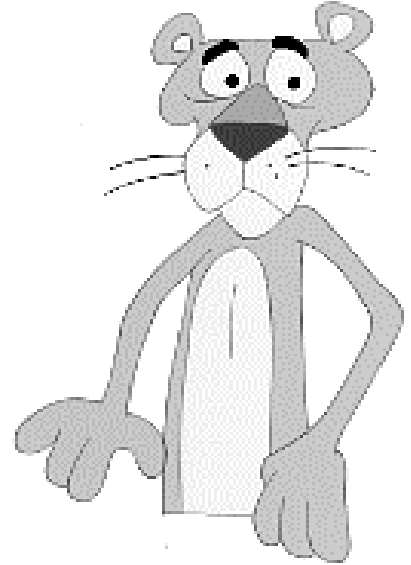
PCOS NEWS

DID YOU REMEMBER?

Did you remember to call Vanessa when you had bleeding this month? If not, then please phone without delay.

The blood test that occurs after bleeding is the most important test for the study.

This blood test is to determine your progesterone level. Your progesterone level will tell us (and you) whether all the hard work you are doing has caused a change in your ovulatory status.



Careful tracking of your symptoms in your menstrual log will serve as an easy reminder for you to call on the first day you have bleeding. This will ensure that your appointment is made on the proper day – at a convenient time for you.

Mark Your Calendars for October 6!



Don't forget to RSVP for
the Fall Fling!!

WORDS TO LIVE BY

"Anima sana in
corpore sano –

- sound mind,
sound body".

- Asics

PCOS MEDICAL FORUM

Sheila Laredo, MD



HIRSUTISM - WHY ME?

We have been told on many occasions of the negative impact that excessive hair growth has on the lives of women with PCOS. Hirsutism is the medical term used to describe the growth of hair in women, which is excessive and in a male pattern. Male-pattern hair growth usually involves hair growth in areas including the face (upper lip, chin and face), chest, back, abdomen and inner thighs. It is generally not considered male-pattern hair growth to have hair in the areas of the leg (especially lower leg), lower arms and breasts (specifically, hair around the areola). Some women do not have excessive hair growth, but instead have male-pattern hair loss, which is usually on the crown of the head or at the front on either side (the temporal regions).

Some of this is genetically mediated and related to ethnicity. Thus, it is common for women of Mediterranean descent to have more body hair, and women of Asian descent to have less body hair. Very interesting studies have recently found that male relatives of women with PCOS are more likely to have premature male-pattern baldness (20-50% of them, depending the study), and that these men are more likely to have higher male hormone levels than men without premature balding. One large population study has associated the progression of baldness in men with a 2.5 to 3-fold increased risk of heart disease. It is possible that this is the male counterpart of PCOS.

Not all women with hirsutism have high male hormone levels. Some are thought to have increased sensitivity to male hormones at the level of the hair follicle. It is not testosterone, but a derivative of testosterone that works at the hair follicle to cause hair growth. It is possible then that some women have too much conversion of testosterone to this derivative (called DHT or dihydrotestosterone) in the hair follicle, causing the unwanted hair to grow. Most women with PCOS though, do have increased male hormone levels as the underlying cause of the hair growth.

What can be done? Most women are very familiar with the various "mechanical" approaches to remove hair, including shaving, depilatory creams, waxing and electrolysis. In addition to this though, anything, which can lower male hormone levels, should eventually impact on hair growth. However, medications that lower male hormones do not immediately impact on hair because they do not cause the hair to fall out. These medications cause **new** hair growth to be thinner and less dark. Thus, it can take anywhere from 6 to 18 months to see a significant impact on hair growth, because the old hairs need to finish their growth cycles before the new ones come in. Often women do not continue with medication for hirsutism because the side effects can be unpleasant and the benefits take too long.

We hope that with lifestyle, we can reduce insulin resistance and thus lower male hormones, and that over time that this will result in reductions in the amount of unwanted hair growth. As part of the PCOS Diet & Exercise Study, we are measuring various male hormone levels, as well as the amount of hair growth in male-pattern areas. You, as a participant in the study, will be among the first to know whether lifestyle changes impacts on this important condition



Nutrition Corner: Diet Detectives & The Zone Diet

Vanessa R. Speers, MSc

Dieting seems to have become a national passion and pastime. But diets don't and won't work when they are 'external' — outside of us, not meeting the needs and expectations of our life pattern. What we may not realize is that even a modest weight loss of 5 to 10 percent of body weight can go a long way to improving our health. Our emphasis should shift from 'dieting' to lifestyle changes and weight management. To be successful at this, we should choose programs that combine and integrate sound behavior change principles with a nutritious, balanced intake of foods and regular physical activity as essential elements of daily life. In an attempt to help you understand some of the "fad" diets out there, the PCOS Diet and Exercise Study has done some of the sleuthing for you. This month we present the upsides and downsides of the zone diet.

Books: Enter the Zone, Mastering the Zone, and The Anti-Aging Zone

Author: Barry Sears, PhD in Biochemistry

The Basic Premise: Calories are distributed as 40% carbohydrate, 30% fat, and 30% protein at every meal and snack. In contrast, most "healthy diets" recommend calories be distributed as 55-60% carbohydrate, 12-20% protein and 20-30% fat.

Claims:

- To be in the Zone, you need a diet that is exactly 40% carbohydrate, 30% fat, and 30% protein at every meal and snack (40:30:30)
- Insulin causes weight gain
- It is easy to lose weight on the Zone diet with "easy" rules
- A moderately active, 5'4" woman weighting 125 pounds with 23% body fat should eat just 775 kcals/day

How A Person Can Lose Weight On This Diet: Calories eaten must be below calories needed to maintain weight. This is a low calorie diet. The higher protein level in the Zone Diet can also provide more satiety with meals and snacks. High carbohydrate food portions and sweets are restricted, so blood sugar surges after a high carbohydrate meal or sweet do not occur. This also helps control appetite.

Meal Plans: Protein needs are based on you lean muscle mass and physical activity level. Then you divide your protein into blocks; each block of protein equals 7 grams of protein. Once you know the required number of protein blocks, you give yourself one carbohydrate and fat block for each protein block. Each meal has the same number of blocks for carbohydrate, protein, and fat. You must keep this ratio for all meals and snacks. One block of carbohydrate is equal to 7 grams of carbohydrates, while one block of fat is 1-½ grams.

Pros:

- Promotes eating fat and protein in the diet
- Address the importance of drinking water
- Recommends snacking throughout the day
- Promotes low-fat protein foods

Cons:

- Limits many grains (pastas, cereal, bread, potatoes), fruits (bananas and orange juice), and vegetables (carrots, sweet potatoes)
- Complicated rules govern the diet. Dieters must calculate protein requirements based on complex charts and tables. Must also follow the "macronutrient block method" to determine how many "blocks" to eat per day and when to eat them.
- Strict, controlled diet that doesn't work for the fast-paced lifestyles of today.
- Recommends that for the average person a Zone-favorable diet should contain no more than 800 to 1200 kcals/day
- Food is treated like a medical prescription. "You must treat food as if it were a drug. You must eat food in a controlled fashion in the proper proportions, as if it were an intravenous drip".

Truth:

- Excess calories cause weight gain, not specific carbohydrates
- Not one of the studies that Sears conducted to prove his diet works has been published
- Diets recommending less than 800 kcals/day can be dangerous and should be medically supervised
- Anyone on a low-calorie diet will likely lose weight
- May impair physical activity performance or activities of daily living



Recipe of the month

Raspberry

Granite



Ingredients

- 3/4 cup water
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons fresh squeezed orange juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons cassis
- 24 ounce bag of frozen raspberries or raspberry puree

Method

Place the water and sugar in a clean saucepan and bring to a boil. Cook the syrup until the sugar has dissolved. Pour the syrup, juices, and cassis into a large stainless bowl. Puree the raspberries in a blender and whisk into the liquids. Pour all into a shallow plastic tray and cover with saran wrap before freezing.

The next day just before serving use a fork to scrape the ice. The granite will have large crystals. Put it in a large stainless bowl in the freezer until ready to plate your dessert.

Yield: 4 servings

Per Serving (4.8 oz): Calories 251; Fat 0.5 g; Saturated Fat 0 g; Cholesterol 0 mg; Sodium 36.5 mg; Carbohydrate 65.7 g; Dietary Fiber 5.6 g; Sugar 58 g; Protein 1.9 g; Vitamin A 12.3 RE; Vitamin C 25 mg; Calcium 20 mg; Iron 0.5 mg. This recipe is 2% fat.

MOTIVATIONAL MATTERS...

...WOMEN AND STRESS

Vanessa R. Speers, M.Sc.



What is stress? When we encounter a stress-creating stimulus, our body responds by secreting hormones that stimulate our nervous system and prepare us to move, or react. If the stimulus is mild or perceived as non-threatening, then there is little hormone release and we react in a healthy fashion.

An example of positive stress is when you get a job promotion or move to a new home. At times, however, excess stress-creating stimuli may overwhelm our abilities to respond and cause a negative effect, often called 'distress'. In this case, the stimuli may present either a 'real' or 'perceived' threat to us. The body responds immediately, pouring out hormones, which results in increased heart rate, blood pressure and breathing, as well as sweaty palms and cool, clammy skin. Stressful events can also trigger emotional feelings of anxiety, fear, insecurity and anger - all of which can have an affect on your motivation!

How much stress is too much?

For most people, brief stressful encounters are well tolerated. Prolonged stress, however, has been linked to many health issues including sleep disturbances, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, weight management, and depressed immune function. In either case, reducing your stress levels can have a positive impact on your health and motivation.

In today's fast paced world, women are experiencing more stress than ever before. Today's women are frequently faced with the stress of juggling their professional life, education needs, family schedules and finances. They are often so caught up in being a "super woman" who does everything for everybody, that they often overlook their own needs.

Consequently, the stress takes a toll, and manifests itself in a variety of symptoms and physical ailments.

Common Symptoms of Stress

headaches
frequent upset stomach or diarrhea, or appetite changes
emotional irritability or overwhelming sadness
muscular tension
tightness in your chest and a feeling as though you can't
catch your breath
feeling nervous or sad
insomnia
persistent fatigue
problems with relationships
frequent cold and flu-like symptoms

Although stress is not an illness, the symptoms of stress are often bad enough to send women for medical attention. In fact, an estimated 75 to 90 percent of all medical office visits are for stress-related problems.

Reducing Stress

There are many methods to reduce stress. Becoming familiar with the major stressors in your life, learning to manage those stressors, and using techniques to promote relaxation are important steps in staying healthy. Below are some helpful tips in managing the stress in your life.

Strategies to Reduce Stress

Eat a balanced diet

Eating a balanced diet can be a simple and effective means to give your brain and body the energy to manage stress and can have other beneficial health effects such as weight reduction and maintaining heart health.

Limit chemicals which intensify stress

Avoid excessive intake of caffeine and other stimulants.

Relax deeply and often

Learn to reduce stress by using relaxation techniques* or meditation.

Limit stress triggers

Identify and take control of your stressors. If you feel overwhelmed with responsibility, look for ways to eliminate some commitments. It may mean postponing school, reducing your work hours or getting help with childcare and housework.

Seek support

Secure help from your support network (partner, family, friends and professionals, as needed) to help manage work and family responsibilities.

*Learn new skills**

Seek out other tools to reduce stress, for example visualization. Your imagination is a powerful tool. Imagining, or visualizing restful scenes and positive images helps to reduce stress and promotes positive thinking.

*** Look to next month issue for Relaxation Techniques to Manage Your Stress**

