

MARCH 2001
ISSUE 4

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PCOS NEWS

SUPPORT
GROUP
MEETINGS

**WEDNESDAY
MARCH 28TH**

**WEDNESDAY
APRIL 25TH**

All meetings will take place at the University of Toronto Athletic Centre, Room 2007 at 6pm. Please confirm your attendance.



**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.

FAQ'S?

This section of the newsletter allows women to ask questions or offer suggestions they might have about the study or PCOS in general. This is your forum. Please email questions or suggestions to vanessa.speers@swchsc.on.ca.

When will I get my blood test results?

This is a common question that I have been asked at almost every assessment appointment I have conducted, so therefore I think it is a fitting first question to answer for the group.

The short answer is - at the end of your 12-months.

The explanation is as follows. Over the course of the study you are tested at three time intervals: baseline, 6-months, and 12-months. During this time, you are your own experiment and are not compared against anyone else. Since most (with the exception of progesterone) of your blood measures are compared against your baseline values (and not with other women in the study), we keep all of your blood samples in the freezer until you have completed your 12-months. The reason for this is that your samples will be analyzed with something called an assay kit. These kits are manufactured by biomedical companies in "lots". Since we are interested in measuring the change(s) in your blood measures due to the treatment group you are in, and not the variation in the assay kit lot, we keep all samples until the end and analyze all of your samples from one kit. This ensures the utmost accuracy in the analyses of each and every sample.

PCOS MEDICAL FORUM

Sheila Laredo, MD

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) Symptoms - Make them Stop!

I mentioned last month that I wanted to do an article talking about some of the simple approaches that women can take to help improve their symptoms of PMS.

If women participating in this study begin to ovulate more regularly, they (you) can anticipate that one of the 'unwanted' side effects may be an increased likelihood of PMS symptoms. You probably know first-hand about many of these symptoms, but if you need a reminder, have a look at the menstrual diary - the common ones are listed under the headings of physical and emotional symptoms. Some women have few if any of these symptoms even when they have regular menstrual cycles; other women can find these symptoms can severely affect their regular day-to-day activities, as well as their work and personal relationships. If we can find ways of reducing these symptoms, simple interventions may be worthwhile.

So, what does the research tell us?

First let me say that there isn't room here to talk about all of the alternatives, but I included some interesting ones that I thought many women would find appealing and relatively easy to do. One thing to keep in mind is that most of the studies that compare treatment to placebo treatments often show that a significant placebo effect exists. In other words, even taking a "sugar pill" with no active ingredients has been shown to result in improvement in symptoms. This may mean that in some way, just the act of doing something to help PMS makes the symptoms of PMS better. The degree of improvement from placebo effects is substantial - probably 20-30%. Here are some of the available options, in no particular order:

Chiropractic manipulation - there have been controlled studies assessing the effect of chiropractic manipulation on symptoms of PMS. One study showed that there may have been an improvement in symptoms with a chiropractic visit, but even women who had a non-chiropractic procedure (the placebo in this study) had some improvement in symptoms. The results were equivocal as to whether the chiropractic manipulation was better than the placebo manipulation.

Massage therapy - a small study determined that massage helped reduce anxiety, depression, pain and overall menstrual distress associated with PMS, when compared with relaxation therapy. Somehow, this one does not come as a big surprise to me!

Cognitive therapy - this form of psychotherapy was found to be very effective in improving PMS symptoms when compared to no therapy. The main drawback of this therapy is that it is likely to be difficult to access health care professionals who are experts in this particular field.



Light therapy - Bright-light therapy has been successfully used in a condition called seasonal affective disorder to help reduce depressive symptoms associated with few daylight hours in winter months. One study compared bright light to dim light for women with PMS and found reduced depression and PMS symptoms in the women who received bright light, but not dim light therapy. These bright lights are actually special lamps that are sold commercially- using a higher watt bulb in your home probably won't make a difference.

Calcium supplementation - One very large U.S. study examined over 450 women with PMS symptoms and gave them either calcium (1200 mg/day) or placebo for 3 months. This study found that the placebo resulted in a 30% reduction in symptoms, but the calcium resulted in a 48% reduction in symptoms. In this study, calcium was found to be better than placebo at improving symptoms (depression, water retention, food cravings and pain) of PMS. A smaller study also found that calcium was superior to placebo. Since calcium is good for your bones too, this one is a double benefit.

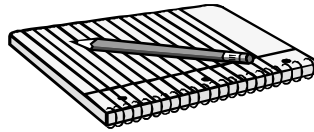
Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) and/or magnesium oxide- There have been several studies looking at both of these supplements alone and in combination. The long and the short of it is that the studies alternatively show no benefit, a possible benefit or a small benefit. Some researchers find a benefit when the two supplements are combined but not when used alone. Others find that even when used alone there may be some improvement in PMS symptoms. Consequently, if there is an effect of B6 or magnesium supplementation on PMS symptoms, it is likely small.

Professional/peer-group treatment - a combined support group/self-management PMS treatment program was given to women with severe PMS. Symptom severity was found to be reduced by as much as 75% with this combined approach. These authors thought that these strategies, including peer support could be applied to other conditions. Another reason to come out for the support group meetings!

In summary then, there are quite a few alternatives available to women who suffer from PMS. Many of these alternatives are relatively safe and easy to accomplish.

CHRISTINE'S CORNER

Christine Mehling, MSC



Using Food Labels To Help Follow A Low Fat Diet

There are two ways in which we can use the information found on the nutrition panel to help achieve a healthier lower fat diet. First, compare the fat content of the products and choose the one that is lower in fat. For example lets compare the two convenience products listed below to see which would be a better choice. Although energy wise the two dishes are the same, the Vegetable Roti contains 15 grams of fat while the chicken potpie contains 25 grams of fat a difference of 10 grams. The Roti also contains 9.5 g compared to the 3 g of fibre found in the chicken potpie, making the roti once again the better choice.

Vegetable Roti		Chicken Potpie	
250g (1 roti)/serving		200g serving (1 pie)	
Energy	465 kcal	Energy	444 kcal
Protein	15 g	Protein	13.2 g
Total Fat	15 g	Total Fat	25 g
Carbohydrate	67 g	Carbohydrate	42.1 g
Sugar	8.3 g	Sugar	10 g
Starch	44 g	Starch	29 g
Fibre	9.5 g	Fibre	3.1 g

The second way is to use the fat information and compare the amount found in the product to the amount of fat that you should be eating on a daily basis. Most of you have been placed on a diet plan. The diet plan has been designed so that you are receiving 25-30% of calories as fat. Thus, following a 1600 kcal diet means a total of approximately 45g fat, a 1800 kcal diet will contain a total of 50 g of fat, and 2000 kcal diet will contain 55 g of fat on a daily basis. Use this value as your fat benchmark. For example lets use the 2 food labels shown above. If you choose the chicken potpie, more than half of your daily fat ration will come from this one product. If you choose the vegetable roti, approximately 33% of your fat ration will be used for the day. By choosing the lower fat item, it will make it easier for you to keep within your fat benchmark for the day. If you decide to choose the higher fat item, to balance out the fat intake for the day, you could try to cut back on fat in the rest of the meal or try and cut back on fat in other ways over the next few days. Remember it is all a balancing act. Just make sure that your pluses and minus all balance out every couple of days.

Determining the Percentage of Fat Calories in Food Products

For those of you who like to play with numbers, here is how you determine what percentage of Calories comes from fat in different food items.

For example: Ice Cream	*1 gram of fat contains 9 kilocalories
Serving size: 125 ml (1/2 cup) 161 Calories	Step 1 Multiply the amount of fat in the portion times 9.
3.6 g Protein	Step 2 Divide the result of step 1 by the Calorie for the given portion
9.2 g Fat	Step 3 Multiply the result by 100 and you get the Percent of Calories from fat
16 g Carbohydrate	

$$9 * 9.2 = 82.8 \text{ kcal}$$
$$(82.8/161)*100 = 51\% \text{ Kcalories come from fat.}$$

Putting It All Together

Here are three label reading tips to help you follow a healthier diet:

1. Watch the portion size. Especially when watching your weight. Portion sizes tend to grow. To prevent this from occurring periodically measure out the portion size that is recommended on the panel.
2. Choose products that contain whole wheat, have no added sugar, and a minimal amount of added fat especially saturated fat as often as possible.
3. Choose the products that state they are low in total fat, and high or very high in fibre over other similar products that do not state that.

Recipe Of The Month

Fettuccine Alfredo with Red Pepper and Snow Peas

from Rose Resiman's "Brings Home Light Cooking"

- 8 oz fettuccine noodles
- 1 1/2 tsp margarine
- 1/2 cup sliced sweet red pepper
- 1/2 cup snow peas
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Sauce

- 1 tbsp Margarine
- 1 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup 1% milk
- 3/4 cup broth (1/4 bullion cube in 3/4 cup water)
- 2 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and place in a bowl.
2. In nonstick skillet, melt margarine or oil, sauté vegetables until tender. Add to pasta.

Sauce:

In small saucepan, melt margarine; add flour and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add milk and stock; Simmer, stirring constantly, just until thickened, 3-5 minutes. Stir in cheese until melted. Season with pepper to taste. Combine with pasta. Garnish with parsley.

Per Serving

- 306 Calories
- 12 grams or 48 Calorie from Protein
- 9 grams or 81 Calorie from Fat (less than 27% Calories from fat)
- 42 grams or 168 Calorie from Carbohydrate
- 3 g fibre

Use this basic sauce recipe and then let your culinary imagination go wild. For example: Try adding 1 tsp dry basil or dill to the sauce. Oregano or italian seasonings are some other herbs to try. For a typical Alfredo tasting sauce, use some nutmeg (1/4 tsp) in the recipe. Add Romano cheese rather than Parmesan cheese for a different flavour. Try stir frying different vegetables. I love using the combination of asparagus, mushrooms and red peppers. Other vegetables to try might be zucchini, green peas, broccoli, or different types of mushrooms. Rather than fettuccine noodles try the tortellini or ravioli pasta or any other type of pasta that you like. There are so many different kinds out there to try. You could also try adding salmon or ham to the sauce for a different flavour sensation. As you can see, the variations are unending. Enjoy!



MOTIVATIONAL MATTERS... ...GOAL SETTING

Vanessa R. Speers, M.Sc.

We all need goals in life, and we all need balance in order to have a complete life. In an effort to achieve the latter, try to make sure you are applying these goal-setting steps in all areas of your life: family goals, career goals, spiritual goals, educational goals, health goals, community goals, and so on, to achieve this balance. Usually, if you can practice a solid goal-setting plan in one area of your life, the habits will spread into other areas of your life as well.

I. Pick a Positive, Realistic and Specific Goal

Try to word your goal in a positive way. Make sure the goal is realistic. Gather information through various sources on how to achieve this goal. A specific goal will help you make better decisions. In addition, having a specific goal will allow you to make a plan to work up to the goal, and will also allow you to know when you've accomplished it.

II. Break Goal into Obtainable Stepping Stones

Setting big goals are great, but unless you're committed to the smaller steps in between, you're bound to get discouraged and frustrated. If I were to drive from my house to Disney World, I'd want to plan out my trip on a map and know where my checkpoints and refueling stops would be along the way. If I just got in the car and started driving south towards Florida, I wouldn't have a very good chance of ending up in Disney World. I would be unsure during the whole trip, and I wouldn't have those checkpoints planned to give me confidence and assure me I was on the right track. The same applies with a goal. I want to know my plan has me on the right track.

III. Establish a Reward for Each Stepping Stone and for Overall Goal

We all have rewards in mind when pursuing a goal. Write your rewards down, whether intrinsic or extrinsic. For each stepping stone you accomplish, attach a reward. When we feel rewarded for something, we're much more apt to want to put more work into that particular activity. It also helps to put a little bit of closure to that step so you can focus on the next step.

IV. Identify All Commitments, Sacrifices and Good Decisions Necessary to Achieving Goal

Many times we set a goal and only plan for the accomplishment in the end. I've often seen athletes who had a goal of competing

professionally in sport; yet, when looking at their daily lives, they weren't making the training commitments necessary, they weren't willing to sacrifice their party life, and they were making poor decisions that would put any chance they had at risk. If you are truly committed to a goal, you've got to bite the bullet and look down the path of that goal. If you were going to race an obstacle course, wouldn't you want to see it ahead of time? Wouldn't you want to know what obstacles would be in your way and where they were so you could start planning ahead of time? Every goal is going to have its challenges and obstacles. The more you can figure out what those obstacles will be and where they might come in, the more you can prepare and be ready to handle them. Obstacles usually come in the form of commitments, sacrifices and good decisions. You'll make it easy on yourself by planning these out ahead of time rather than being confronted by them unexpectedly and having to make decisions on the spot.

V. Identify Sources of Motivation, Inspiration and Support for Your Goal.

A goal needs to be constantly fed with motivation, inspiration and support, and it's up to you to keep this up. Don't sit around and wait for the world to motivate you. Try to identify the things that get you fired up about your goal. Whether it's books, movies, scrapbooks, inspirational quotes, music, pictures, role models, supportive friends, or something else -- surround yourself with these things as much as possible. Put some quotes on your wall, cut out some pictures of people, or things that inspire you and put them where you can see them. Hang out with positive, goal-oriented friends more often. Your mind leads you, so be choosy about what you feed it.

VI. Sign a Contract of Perseverance

After you've put in some good thought and hopefully filled out the first five steps here, look back over your plan and ask yourself if the goal is worth it to you. If so, write out a contract for yourself and sign it. Some people are afraid to set goals for fear that they won't be able to accomplish them. I've had many goals that haven't come true after years of hard work. Do I regret them and feel I wasted time and energy? Absolutely not. You see, there's a little secret about life that you might have discovered already. The reward is found along the path, not in the final destination. When you reach with all your heart for a positive goal, good things happen along the way, inside of you and around you -- it's inevitable. I think Thoreau said it best: "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours." Good luck with your goals. Aim high but concentrate on one step at a time.

