



PCOS NEWS

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When is Sheila Coming Back?

Although an exact date has not been set, we expect to see Sheila back from her maternity leave in March. Feel free to contact her by e-mail in the mean time.

New E-mail Addresses!



Please note that all swchsc.on.ca email addresses have changed to SW.CA effective immediately. Please see the contact info at left for our new addresses.

Calling All Budding Journalists!



Many women in the study have expressed an interest in hearing each others study and PCOS experiences - good and bad. If you would be interested in having your story published in the next newsletter, please contact Vanessa for your chance to support your fellow study participants. Don't be shy!

WELLNESS TIP

Write a mission statement for yourself. A mission statement is a statement about a person, group, or organization that describes the purpose, beliefs, and general goals of the authors. The mission statement helps to create the means to achieve the written goals, and it is extremely helpful for some to have a mantra to motivate them to action.

Medical Forum

by Sheila Laredo, MD

Wear your milk moustache with pride!

As you already know, insulin resistance is one of the features of polycystic ovary syndrome. In those who don't have menstrual irregularities (including men!), but who have other symptoms such as increased body weight, high waist circumference, high triglyceride and low HDL (good) cholesterol, high blood pressure, impaired glucose tolerance or Type 2 diabetes, this condition is called syndrome X, or metabolic syndrome. It is thought that almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of adults have this condition.

Researchers are increasingly interested in factors that can affect insulin resistance. Diet is one area that has been examined. However, a new study puts a twist on looking at the role of diet. This study (Pereira, in JAMA 2002) looked specifically at the effect that dairy products had on insulin resistance. The researchers used a detailed diet history, and determined how often certain foods were eaten over a 4 week period of time. People were diagnosed with insulin resistance if they had at least 2 of the following 4 items: High fasting blood insulin levels or abnormal fasting blood glucose levels (pre-diabetic or diabetic range), high body weight, high blood pressure, or abnormal cholesterol values. Here is what they found:

- The majority of dairy products consumed were milk and milk drinks, as well as butter, cream and cheese - these items accounted for over 90% of dairy intake. Food like yogurt, dips, ice cream and puddings made up most of the rest. The researchers excluded mixed recipes that had small amount of dairy products in them.
- Dairy intake decreased by about 13% (or 3 servings/week) over 7 years of study. Those who used more dairy products were more likely to eat more servings of whole grain, fruits, vegetables, saturated fat, and less likely to have sweetened soft drinks.
- For those who were overweight, the chance of developing any component of insulin resistance syndrome (including high insulin or blood glucose, blood pressure, high body weight, and abnormal cholesterol) was lower the more dairy products were eaten. Even when other dietary differences were taken into account, the risk of insulin resistance syndrome was lower for high dairy eaters.
- It was calculated that those with the highest dairy intake had an approximately 70% lower risk of developing insulin resistance syndrome than those with the lowest dairy intake. This translates into about 20% lower risk for each additional dairy serving per day. The positive effect of dairy intake was greater in women than in men. Interestingly, higher fiber intake predicted **lower** risk of insulin resistance, and higher protein (from animal sources) predicted **higher** risk of the syndrome.

Although we generally recommend lower fat dairy products for weight reduction and improvement in cholesterol levels, the amount of fat in the dairy products did not seem particularly important in affecting insulin resistance.

What does this mean for me? The study did not specifically examine women with PCOS, although it is very likely that a proportion of the women included had PCOS. However, since women with PCOS are much more likely to have insulin resistance syndrome, this study may be of particular interest, in terms of affecting diet quality. If the results of this study hold true for women with PCOS, then perhaps increasing dietary dairy can positively impact on insulin resistance in PCOS too.

How much dairy is enough? In this study, participants in the highest group of dairy intake had over 5 servings of dairy a day, although a substantial benefit was seen in those having more than 2 servings per day. With at least 2 servings per day, the risk of insulin resistance syndrome was lowered by 40%, compared with by about 70% for those having more than 5 servings.

The moral of this story? Wearing a milk moustache might not only get you on a big ad in a bus stop shelter - it might be great for your health too! Wear your milk moustache with pride!

The Skinny on Herbs and Weight Loss

by Vanessa R. Speers, M.Sc.

Women in the study often ask me my opinions on various herbal supplements and their claims. Health food stores are brimming with herbal weight loss preparations that promise to rev-up your metabolism and burn fat. Because herbs are natural, many people believe they are safer than over-the-counter and prescription drugs. In some cases, this could not be further from the truth. The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) of 1994 regulates the accurate labelling of all dietary supplements and has the authority to remove any product that poses a "significant or unreasonable" risk to consumers. It does not, however, require that herbs undergo the same rigorous safety testing that is required for drugs. But this does not mean that herbs cannot have powerful drug-like effects. Be sure to read about the facts from some of the most popular ones below:

Ephedra: One of the most popular and highly marketed herbal ingredients for weight loss is the ancient Chinese herb, ma huang, also known as ephedra. An estimated 12 million people are using ephedra-containing products for weight loss and increased energy. Ephedrine, one of the active ingredients in ephedra, is an amphetamine-like compound that has been shown to increase metabolism and suppress appetite, especially when combined with caffeine. Unfortunately, it also increases heart rate and blood pressure. According to a recent study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, misuse of ephedra has been associated with serious side effects including heart attack, high blood pressure, rapid heart rate, stroke, seizures, and in some cases, permanent disability and death. Less serious side effects include headache, irritability, insomnia and nausea.

Caffeine: Caffeine is a stimulant that increases metabolism in humans and is considered safe for most healthy adults when taken in moderation. Despite being a stimulant, caffeine does little to promote weight loss when taken alone. For this reason, ephedra-containing weight loss aids often contain one or more sources of herbal caffeine, such as kola nut, guarana and yerbe mate. Since caffeine increases the stimulant effects of ephedra, this powerful combination could have serious consequences.

Garcinia Cambogia: *Garcinia cambogia* is a plant indigenous to India, which is rich in the active ingredient hydroxycitric acid (HCA). Marketed under the brand names Citrin and CitriMax, HCA has been shown, in some studies, to enhance weight loss by suppressing appetite and preventing the conversion and storage of carbohydrate to fat. According to scientific research the evidence for *Garcinia cambogia* to be used as a weight loss aid is equivocal. The preponderance of the evidence suggests it has only a weak effect. A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* failed to produce significant weight or fat loss for *Garcinia cambogia* when compared to a placebo.

Herbal Diuretics and Laxatives: Diuretic and laxatives represent a growing industry in the herbal weight loss arena but in addition to being ineffective, they can be dangerous. Herbal laxatives containing senna leaves or cascara sagrada bark are not recommended as part of a weight loss strategy since they are likely to promote dehydration. Herbal laxatives do not promote fat loss and may lead to dependence on laxatives because of decreased muscle tone in the colon. Herbal diuretics in the form of buchu, juniper and uva-ursi are often found in body slimming formulas. The quick weight loss often seen in people taking diuretics consists of water, not fat, and will be regained with hydration.

What Really Works? While people continue to look for the quick fix that will help them shed fat and lose weight, slick advertising campaigns that promise quick and effortless weight loss will continue to lure frustrated dieters. I caution clients not to be fooled by the hype surrounding these supplements. The bottom line is that to lose weight, you must burn more calories than you consume. A lifelong commitment to healthful eating and daily exercise remains the only regimen that works.



Healthier Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 tablespoons butter, room temperature
- 1/4 cup prune puree
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 cup liquid egg substitute
- 1/3 cup chocolate chips

Method: Sift the flour, cornstarch, salt and baking soda together and set aside. Whip the butter and prune paste together in the bowl of an electric mixer until emulsified, scraping down the sides of the bowl often. Add the sugar and beat the mixture until the sugar is dissolved. Beat in the egg substitute and beat until fluffy, remember to scrape down the sides of the bowl. Mix the chips into the dry ingredients and mix into the egg mixture while the mixer is on low speed. Work until just mixed and finish mixing with a rubber spatula. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or spray with non-stick spray and bake in a preheated 350F oven for 12-15 minutes until golden and the top springs back to the touch.

Yield: 18 servings

Per Serving (1 oz): Calories 102; Fat 3.1 g; Saturated Fat 1.8 g; Cholesterol 5.5 mg; Sodium 108 mg; Carbohydrate 17.6 g; Dietary Fiber 1 g; Sugar 9.9 g; Protein 1.5 g; Vitamin A 33 RE; Vitamin C 1 mg; Calcium 6.2 mg; Iron 1 mg. This recipe is 28% fat.

Question of the Month? How could you make this recipe more glycemic index friendly? Email your answers to Vanessa to be eligible for the mystery prize.

Make Your New Year's Resolutions Stick in 2003!

by Vanessa R. Speers, M.Sc.



So last year you were all set to get in shape for the new year...yet your good intentions were abandoned before the holiday decorations were packed away. If you'd like to follow through on the weight loss resolutions you make in 2003, here are some simple guidelines:

1. Be Realistic. Don't expect to shed 50 pounds, *and* stop smoking, *and* train for the marathon all at once. For that matter, don't expect to shed the 50 pounds in three months. A healthful rate of weight loss is 1-2 pounds per week, which means that it will probably take up to a year to achieve this goal. Focus on one "big" goal, then:

2. Set Mini Goals. Mini goals should be process-oriented; that is, it is more effective to say "I will work out three times per week and eat 1600 calories per day" than to say "I will lose 50 pounds by the end of the year," because the former statement explains *how* you will achieve your larger, outcome-oriented goal. For example, if you want to lose 50 pounds this year, some mini goals would include:

- Having at least one fruit or vegetable serving with every meal or snack. (One trick that works: Fill half your plate with vegetables, 1/4 of your plate with protein, and 1/4 of your plate with starch.)
- Swapping high-calorie, high-fat items in your usual diet for lower-calorie alternatives: Lattes made with skim milk instead of mochas made with whole milk, white meat poultry without skin instead of dark meat poultry with skin, etc.
- Walking for 20 minutes, five times each week.
- Drinking 8 glasses of water each day.

3. Anticipate Potential Obstacles and Plan Around Them. If losing weight were as simple as "eat less, move more," then we'd all be slim. The truth is, it is easier in our society to eat an unhealthy diet and remain inactive than it is to eat well and exercise regularly. Our busy lives, the abundance of high-calorie convenience foods available, the ease of driving over walking or riding a bicycle — all of these factors contribute to our battle of the bulge. The weight loss journey becomes even more complicated if you are prone to emotional eating. This doesn't mean that achieving your weight loss goal is impossible, but it does mean you'll need to be creative:

- To save time on preparing produce, take advantage of pre-bagged salads, baby carrots, and even frozen fruits and vegetables.
- Plan for leftovers, and pack them as a healthy lunch for the following day — you'll save money as well as time. If you have extra time on weekends, do some cooking and freeze meals in advance for the coming week.
- If you eat out often, become familiar with restaurants that serve healthful meals. Don't be shy about asking how dishes are prepared or whether substitutions can be made.
- If not having to go to a gym will make the difference in whether or not you get your workout in, then plan to exercise at home. Keep an enticing stock of exercise videos on hand, or invest in a quality cardio machine.
- If you do use a gym, choose one with a location near your home or office.
- Make a list of coping mechanisms that you can use instead of eating: Call a supportive friend, write in a journal, meditate or pray, etc.

4. Reward Yourself. Reward yourself once you achieve your mini goals. This will provide motivation for you to continue on the path to a healthy weight. Choose a non-food item, such as a massage or some new clothes. You can also choose items that will enhance your new healthy lifestyle, such as workout clothing or low-fat cookbooks. Even a small reward like adding gold stars to your appointment book for every day that you work out or meet your calorie goal can give you a boost, especially as you watch those gold stars add up. Find any excuse to reward progress, no matter how small, as long as it is in the right direction.