

Natural Help

FOR
PCOS

Polycystic ovary syndrome, often referred to as PCOS, causes 1 in 10 women to have an abnormal increase in male hormone levels—including testosterone and androgens. This wreaks havoc in the endocrine system and leads to a susceptibility for a multitude of diseases including infertility issues. The good news? There are natural solutions that may alleviate or even reverse PCOS.

Signs and Symptoms

In simple terms, PCOS means there are multiple small cysts on a woman's ovaries that are caused by a hormonal imbalance. Cysts develop when an egg in the ovary isn't released or a sac closes around the egg and it fills with fluid. Physicians typically diagnose

the condition using an ultrasound to look for a series of cysts resembling a "string of pearls," although it's possible to have the disease without this visible evidence.

The most common symptoms of PCOS include:

- Partial or total infertility
- Irregular or missing periods
- Hirsutism (excessive hair growth, including facial or abdominal)
- Fatigue, changes in mood, depression, low libido
- Weight gain and trouble losing weight
- Fatty liver and metabolic syndrome

- Insulin resistance, increased risk for diabetes

- High male hormone levels, including testosterone

Believed to be caused by genetic, health, and lifestyle factors, it's a good idea to work with your health care provider to determine whether you may have this complex and frequently under-diagnosed condition.

Supplemental Solutions

Many women suffering from PCOS are relieved to learn there are natural alternatives to the hormone therapy often used to treat the disease. In addition to lifestyle changes, the following herbs can make all the difference in the quest for optimal health.

Berberine

This compound, which is found in barberry and goldenseal, is a potent tool for women with PCOS. Research shows that it can impact numerous



aspects of the condition, without side effects. In one study involving 98 PCOS patients that appeared in the journal *PLOS ONE*, researchers found that taking berberine lowered sex hormone-binding globulin levels, insulin resistance, total cholesterol, low-density (“bad”) cholesterol, and triglycerides after just four months. The compound also had a beneficial effect on menstruation and ovulation. Other studies point to berberine’s ability to assist with weight loss and reduce fatty liver.

Hintonia

Elevated blood sugar levels can be an ongoing problem for women with PCOS. In fact, it’s estimated that 50 to 70 percent of those with the condition also suffer from prediabetes. *Hintonia latiflora* is a little-known herb clinically shown to support normal blood sugar metabolism, as well as healthy A1C and insulin levels. In one study of 177 patients with prediabetes, those taking hintonia saw their A1C improve by an average of 10.4

percent, their fasting glucose improve 23.3 percent, and their postprandial (post-meal) glucose levels improve as much as 24.9 percent. An effective hintonia supplement should deliver 20 mg of polyphenols from the herb’s bark, as well as supporting nutrients like the B vitamins, chromium, zinc, and vitamins C and E.

Curcumin

This Ayurvedic spice provides potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may lessen low-grade inflammation that contributes to many of the unwanted symptoms of PCOS. Preliminary research also suggests that curcumin may help reduce ovarian cysts and was comparable to clomiphene citrate, a



widely used drug to induce ovulation. To get these benefits, choose a curcumin supplement with clinically proven bioavailability like BCM-95 (Curcugreen). This proprietary form of curcumin is blended with turmeric essential oil containing ar-turmerone complex for optimal absorption.

Ashwagandha

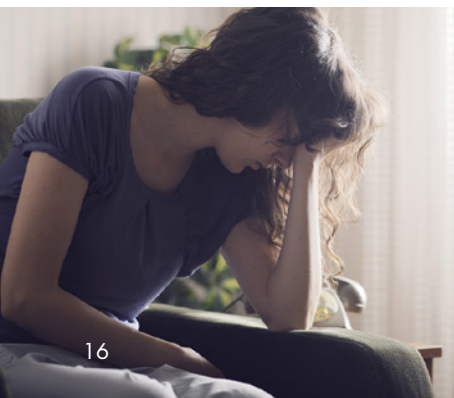
This herbal adaptogen can help reduce PCOS symptoms by improving insulin resistance and easing the stress that often



accompanies the condition. Ashwagandha has been clinically found to lower stress by as much as 28 percent by lowering cortisol levels. This, in turn, may lead to weight loss. Look for a supplement standardized to contain five percent withanolides for a body in greater balance.

Beware of Disruptors

PCOS is a hormonally based disorder so it makes sense to avoid chemicals that can influence the body’s natural hormones. Called endocrine disruptors, these chemicals reside in many of the things we use every day, including plastic food containers, household cleaners, and personal care products. One easy first step? Stop using plastic containers whenever possible and switch to glass. It’s also smart to learn about the ingredients in the products you use. One excellent resource is the Environmental Working Group’s Skin Deep cosmetic ingredient database (ewg.org/skindeep). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also maintains a website to help you uncover the potential endocrine disruptors and toxins in the household products you use. You can find it at householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov. ■



Addressing the Depression of PCOS

If all of the physical symptoms of PCOS weren’t enough, women with the syndrome often suffer from depression. Fortunately there’s an herb for that, too! Saffron can increase serotonin levels and reduce cortisol, which may help to lift the weight of depression as effectively as the antidepressant drug, fluoxetine. Studies

show that saffron also offers protection against inflammation and oxidative stress. Look for a supplement with EP15 saffron, a form that assures standardization of the clinically studied levels of the compound. Combining saffron with BCM-95 (Curcugreen) curcumin can help enhance mental well-being even more.