

# Eating well with polycystic ovary syndrome

There's no special diet for PCOS. But eating well and being active can help to manage some of your symptoms and reduce your risk of developing heart disease and diabetes

If you're overweight, losing just 5 to 10% of your weight can improve irregular periods and infertility, and other problems caused by PCOS, such as insulin resistance. For advice about losing weight see *How to lose weight* on [www.healthinfo.org.nz](http://www.healthinfo.org.nz). The following tips will also help you to lose weight.

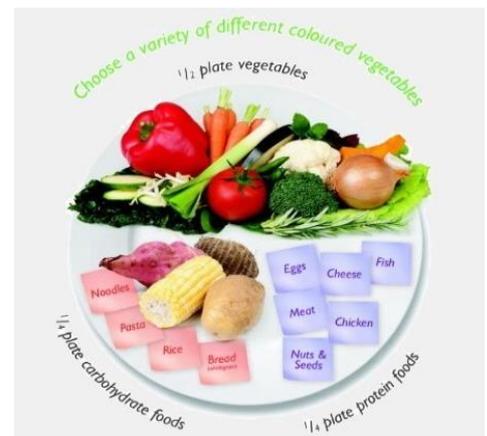
## Tips for eating well and being active

### Eat a variety of foods each day

Choose lots of different foods from the tables below. The tables show four food groups. You need food from all four of the groups, so try to have something from at least three of them at every meal.

### Have sensible portions and follow the healthy plate model

Use the servings sizes in the tables below and follow the healthy plate model in the picture for your main meal.



### Choose unprocessed, wholegrain breads and cereals

Choose wholegrain breads and cereals, brown rice and wholemeal pasta. They're rich in nutrients, high in fibre and help to keep your blood sugar levels stable. Look for products that say "wholegrain" on the package or contain 5 g or more of fibre per 100 g of food.

### Avoid sugar and sugary foods

Avoid added sugar (sometimes called fructose, glucose or sucrose) or honey in food and drinks. Keep cakes, biscuits, sweet pastries, chocolate, lollies, ice cream and puddings for occasional treats.

### Choose healthy fats and low-fat cooking methods

Use margarine and healthy oils such as canola, peanut, olive, rice bran, sunflower, soy bean. Instead of frying or roasting, use low-fat cooking methods such as baking, grilling, microwaving, boiling, and steaming.

### Don't skip meals

Eat three meals a day at regular times. If you're hungry between meals, have healthy snacks such as fresh fruit, low-fat milk, lite or plain unsweetened yoghurt, reduced-fat crackers with cottage cheese or avocado and tomato, and a small handful (30 g) of unsalted raw nuts.

### Be active every day

Do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days. Be active in as many ways as possible – move more and sit less.

If you aren't active, ask your GP or practice nurse about a Green Prescription. This includes a free consultation with a physical activity coach to create a personal activity plan for you. It also gives you the opportunity to take part in group physical activity sessions.



You may want to consult a dietitian to help you develop an eating plan that suits your lifestyle, manage your symptoms and help you to lose weight if you need to.

## Food tables

### Breads and cereals

Choose at least six servings every day. A serving is one medium slice of bread, ½ to 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or 1 cup of cooked rice or pasta.

Foods to include	Foods to limit
Wholemeal, wholegrain or rye bread, wholemeal pita bread	White bread, white pita bread or panini, plain naan bread or chapati
Wholemeal and wholegrain cereals such as All Bran, Bran Flakes, Bran and Sultanas, muesli – plain or toasted, porridge oats, Weet-Bix	Refined breakfast cereals such as Cornflakes and Rice Bubbles
Wholegrain crackers such as Ryvita, Vita-Weat	High-sugar breakfast cereals
Brown or wild rice, wholemeal pasta	Plain crackers such as water crackers or plain rice crackers
	White rice, pasta, noodles

### Vegetables and fruit

Choose at least three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit every day. A serving is size of the palm of your hand. Try to have many different colours of vegetables and fruit, as they all have different antioxidants and vitamins.

Foods to include	Foods to limit
Vegetables: fresh, frozen or canned	Vegetables: fried such as chips, wedges, pompoms and hash-browns; or in creamy, buttery or cheese sauces
Fruit: fresh, frozen, cooked or canned without added sugar	Fruit: canned in syrup or cooked with added sugar; dried fruit and fruit juice

### Milk and milk products

Choose two to three servings every day. A serving is 1 cup (250 ml) of milk, 1 pottle (150 g) of yoghurt or 2 slices (40 g) of cheese.

Foods to include	Foods to limit
Low-fat milk and milk products such as green or yellow-top milk, lite or plain unsweetened yoghurt, lower fat cheese such as Edam, and cottage cheese	Full-fat milk and milk products such as dark-blue-top milk, Greek yoghurt, sweetened yoghurt, cream cheese, reduced or sour cream, cream, ice cream



## Lean meats, chicken, seafood, eggs, legumes, nuts and seeds

Choose at least one serving every day. A serving is a piece of meat, chicken or fish the size and thickness of the palm of your hand, 1 egg,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cooked dried beans,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup nuts or seeds, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup tofu.

Foods to include	Foods to limit
<p>Lean meat, skinless chicken, fish (especially oily fish such as herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines, tuna), eggs</p> <p>Legumes (cooked dried beans and peas such as baked beans, kidney beans, chickpeas, cannellini beans and lentils) and tofu</p> <p>Nuts and seeds – raw or roasted without oil and salt</p>	<p>White meat fat, chicken skin or fat, pork crackling</p> <p>Fatty meats such as corned beef, luncheon, mutton flaps, pork strips, salami, sausages, shoulder or neck cuts, streaky bacon</p> <p>Crumbed or battered and deep-fried meat, chicken or fish</p> <p>Nuts and seeds roasted with oil and salt</p>

## Other foods and drinks

	Foods to include	Foods to limit
<b>Desserts</b>	Fresh fruit and lite or plain unsweetened yoghurt	High-sugar desserts such as sweet pies and pastries, ice cream, chocolate, cakes and biscuits
<b>Fats</b>	Small amounts of margarine and oils. Try lite mayonnaise, cottage cheese, or avocado as an alternative spread to margarine	Butter, butter blends, lard, dripping, vegetable shortening, Kremelta, Chefade, palm oil or palm kernel oil, coconut oil, coconut cream or milk
<b>Drinks</b>	Water (tap, mineral or soda water), low-fat milk, tea, coffee, diet soft drinks	Fruit juice, sugar sweetened drinks such as cordial, energy and soft drinks and flavoured milk, alcohol

*Written by the Christchurch Branch of Dietitians New Zealand. Adapted by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed September 2021*