



Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

Acknowledgements

Jean Hailes acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continued connection to land, waters and culture. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource has been developed in partnership between Jean Hailes for Women's Health and Alukura Women's Health Service on behalf of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress), on the land of the Central Arrernte people.

We acknowledge the support and involvement of NT Health – Primary and Public Health, Central Australia.

We would also like to acknowledge the women of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and surrounding communities who participated in consultations to help shape these resources.

Jean Hailes for Women's Health gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government.

Feedback

We welcome all feedback and suggestions on how to improve this toolkit.

Send your feedback to education@jeanhailes.org.au



About us

About Jean Hailes

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation committed to improving women's health across Australia through every life stage. We use the latest research to develop our website and resources on a range of topics, including polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), periods, sex and sexual health, menopause, endometriosis, and vulva, vagina, ovaries and uterus.

Jean Hailes takes a broad and inclusive approach to the topic of women's health. The terms 'women' and 'girls' are used throughout this resource to refer to all women, girls and gender-diverse people.



About Alukura

Alukura Women's Health Service is an Aboriginal women-only place in Alice Springs caring for the health of Aboriginal women and infants. The name 'Alukura' is a Central Arrernte word meaning women's camp or women's place. The service is provided in a comfortable and culturally safe place for clients.

Alukura provides specialised women's health and midwifery case-managed maternity care. It is guided by traditional Aboriginal grandmother's law to preserve and recognise Aboriginal women's law, culture and languages, as they relate to pregnancy, childbirth and the care of Aboriginal women and babies. With a multi-disciplinary team approach, Alukura ensures Aboriginal women and babies have access to best practice comprehensive primary health care.

Alukura is part of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, which is the largest Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation in the Northern Territory.



How to use this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to help health professionals and other health workers deliver education about periods and the menstrual cycle and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) to Aboriginal women. It includes two presentations:

- Periods and the menstrual cycle
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

These are available as hard-copy flipcharts or can be downloaded electronically from www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-resources

Using this toolkit

Before using the presentations, we recommend you read through them in full and ensure you understand them.

The presentations have been developed to use with Aboriginal women and girls in Central Australia and might not be appropriate for use with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in other parts of Australia. We recommend always consulting with knowledgeable people in the local community, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, Liaison Officers or

Community Engagement Workers, before using this toolkit to ensure it is relevant and culturally appropriate.

Remember that much of the information in the presentations is considered Women's Business and is regarded as sensitive and private to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It should not be shared with or made available to men.

The presentations can be used in group sessions and one-on-one consultations. You may choose to deliver the full presentation, or just a few slides, depending on the type of session and the needs of the audience. The time required to deliver a presentation depends on the topic and the needs of the audience. Allow around 30 minutes to deliver *Periods and the menstrual cycle* and around 45 minutes to deliver *Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)*. When delivering the presentations in a group setting, a private space should be provided for the participants to attend. If you are using an iPad or tablet to deliver the presentation, we recommend printing the facilitator notes to refer to.

Further information

You can view and download additional resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls from www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-resources

For example:

- brochures on periods and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- animations on periods, what's PCOS, and how to stay healthy with PCOS.

Useful websites

Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-guide-healthy-eating

Australian Indigenous Health/*InfoNet*
www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au

Baker Heart & Diabetes Institute – Portion Plate Guide
www.baker.edu.au/health-hub/fact-sheets/the-portion-guide

Jean Hailes for Women's Health
www.jeanhailes.org.au

Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
www.caac.org.au

About the artwork



The cover artwork is **Arelhe Areye** by Amunda Gorey. “This image is to represent different types of ladies who develop PCOS and they’re all different, for some it’s genetics and for some it’s lifestyle.”

Amunda Gorey is an Arrernte artist who grew up in the remote community of Santa Teresa, an hour south-east of Alice Springs.



Illustrations by Coolamon Creative.

Coolamon Creative is a 100% Aboriginal owned and operated creative services agency operating out of Darwin and Alice Springs.

What's polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)?

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a condition that affects women.

It means your period:

- doesn't come every month
- doesn't come at the same time every month, or
- doesn't come at all.



How common is PCOS?

PCOS is common.

Up to 1 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls have PCOS.



What causes PCOS?

- Hormones
- Family history
- Weight
- Diet and exercise



PCOS symptoms

If you have PCOS, you might notice things like:

- pimples
- hair that grows on your face, back or tummy.



PCOS symptoms

If you have PCOS, you might notice things like:

- loss of hair on your head
- easy weight gain.



PCOS symptoms

If you have PCOS, you might notice things like:

- feeling sad and worried
- trouble getting pregnant.



How do you know if you have PCOS?

If you have symptoms, talk to your health carer. They will:

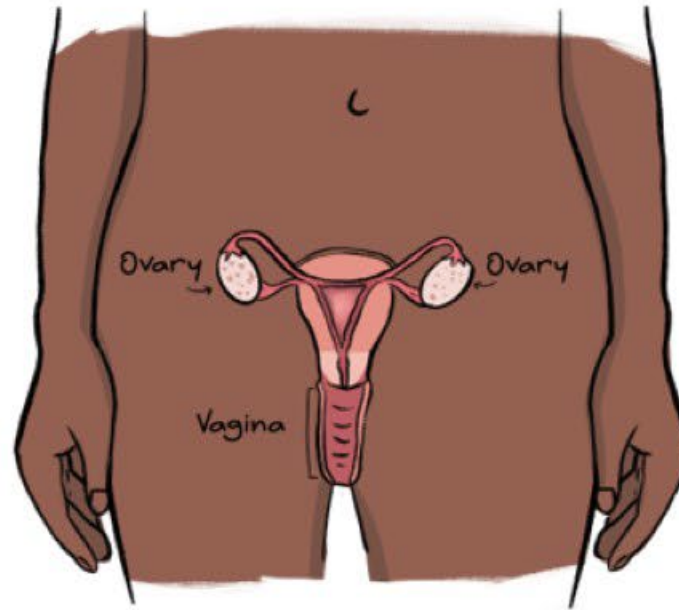
- ask how often you get your period
- ask about your symptoms like pimples or extra hair on your face or back
- do a blood test to check your hormones.

Your health carer might be a doctor, nurse or health worker.



How do you know if you have PCOS?

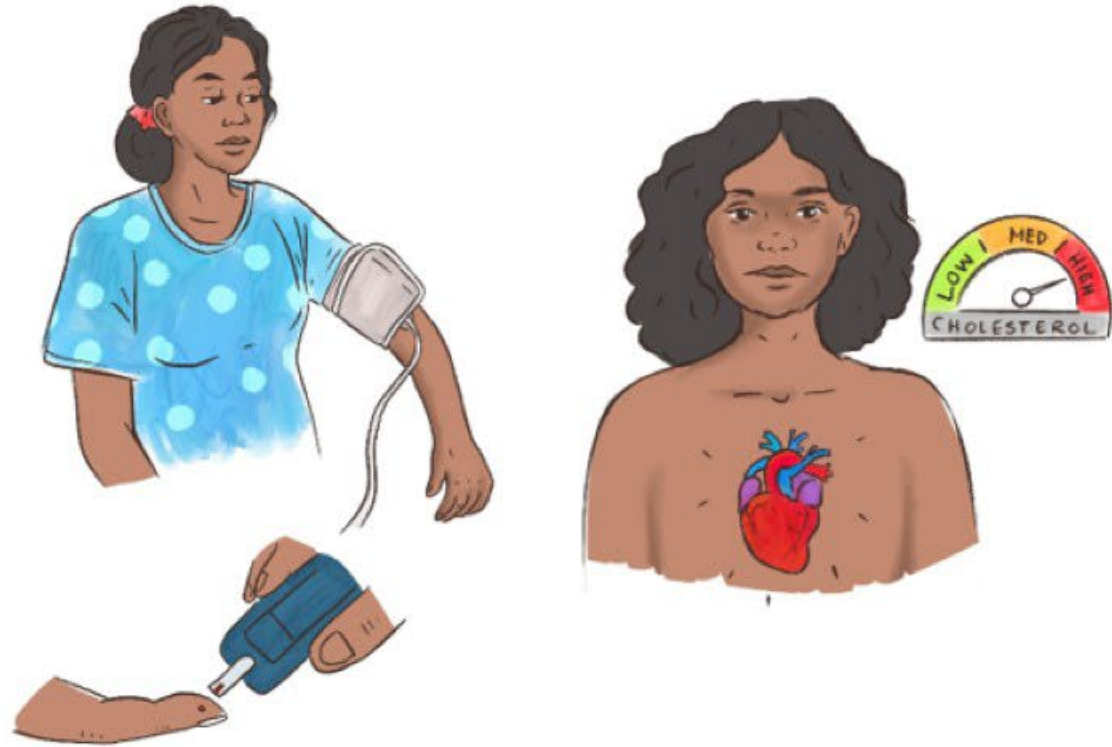
A doctor might also check your ovaries using a machine called an ultrasound.



PCOS can lead to other health issues

PCOS can impact your health and lead to serious health conditions. You might get:

- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol.



Stay healthy if you have PCOS

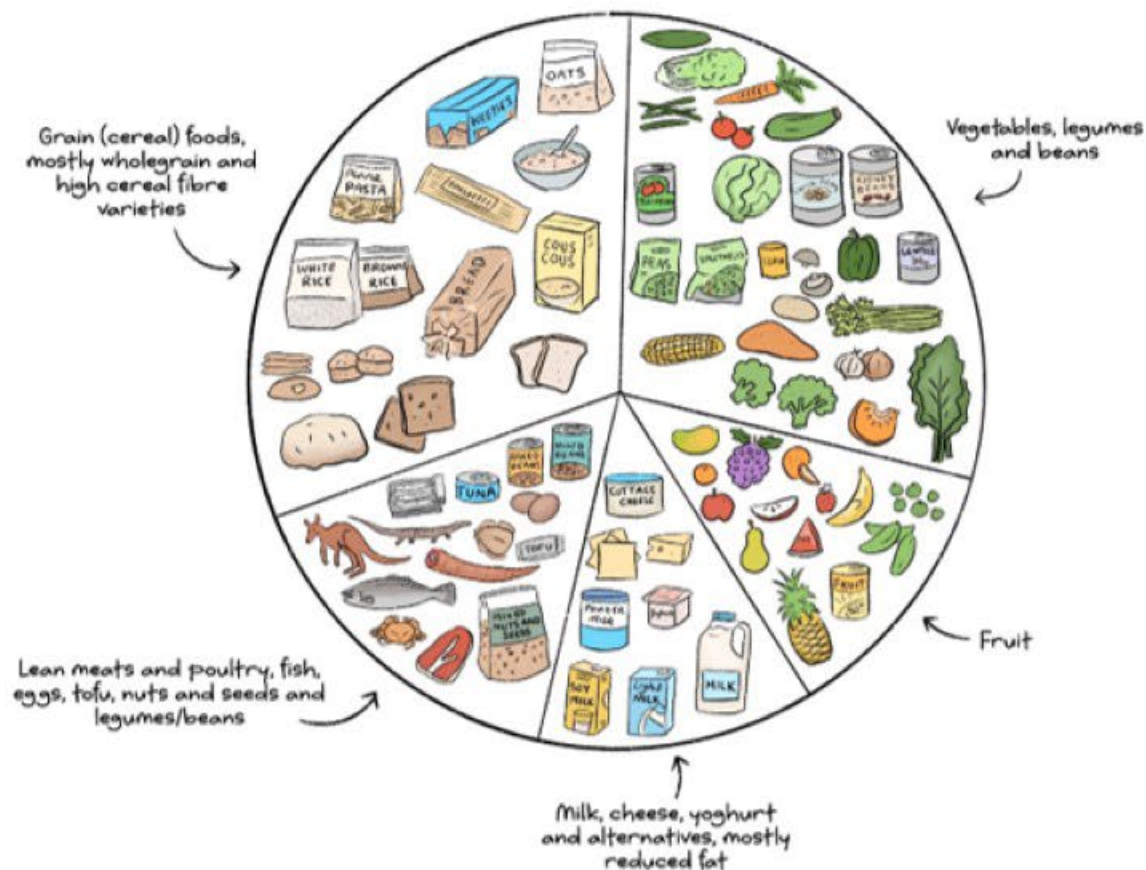
If you live a healthy life you can:

- improve your symptoms
- reduce your risk of getting other health issues.



Healthy diet

Eat foods from the 5 food groups every day.



Based on material provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council

Healthy diet

- Eat regular meals and snacks when you feel hungry.
- Eat less and stop eating when you feel full.
- Drink more water and less sugary drinks.



Healthy diet

Include healthy fats in your diet.

For example:

- fatty fish like salmon, tuna and sardines
- nuts and seeds
- avocado
- extra virgin olive oil.



Healthy diet

A healthy meal should be half vegetables, with some protein and some grains.

Grilled chicken, beans and salad



Meat and vegetables



Kangaroo tail and roast vegetables



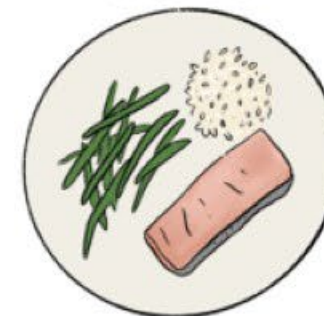
Drumstick with rice and salad



Chicken salad



Salmon, rice and beans



Healthy diet

- A dietitian can help you learn more about healthy eating.
- Your health carer can refer you to a dietitian.



Physical activity

If you have PCOS it's important to move your body every day.

For example:

- go for a walk
- do some gardening
- collect bush tucker
- dance
- play football.



Physical activity

If you have PCOS:

- move your body for at least 30 minutes every day
- ask your health carer if you need to do more physical activity to stay healthy.



Healthy weight

If you have PCOS, it's important to be a healthy weight. Your health carer can tell you:

- if you are a healthy weight
- if you need to lose some weight.



Pimples and hair growth

You can manage your PCOS symptoms in different ways.
For example:

- you can pluck, wax or shave hair on your face and back
- you can use creams or medicines for pimples and hair growth.



Having a baby

If you have PCOS and want to have a baby:

- plan to get pregnant before you turn 35 years old
- talk to your health carer if you have trouble getting pregnant.

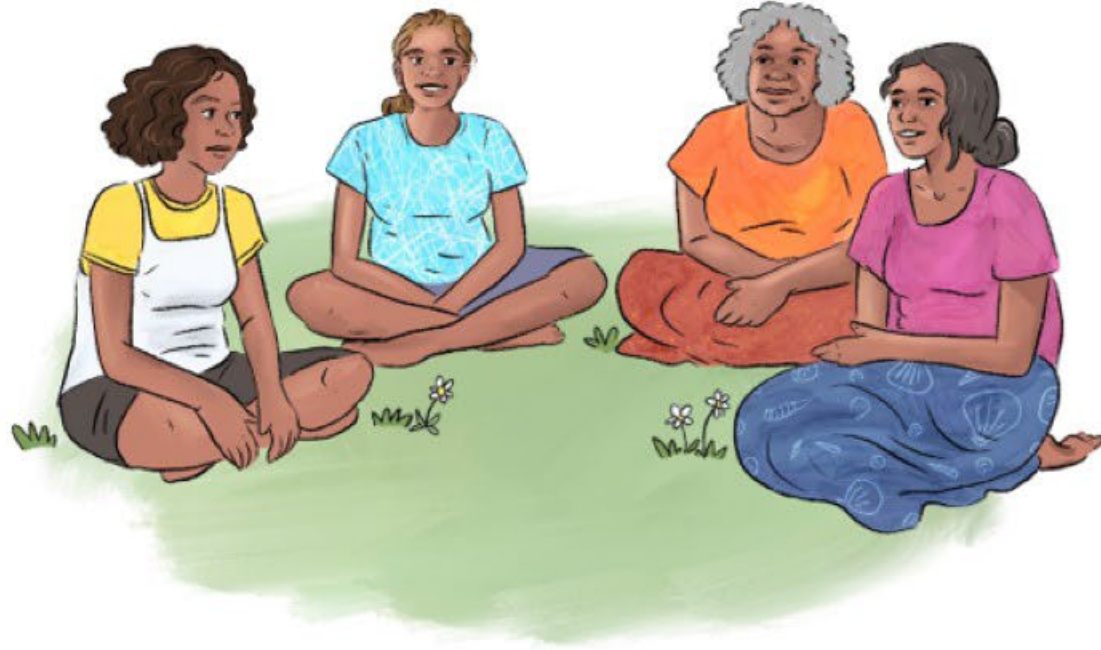


Feeling sad

PCOS can make you feel sad, unhappy, worried or nervous.

If you feel like this, talking can help. Talk to:

- friends, family, Elders
- your health carer
- a counsellor or psychologist.



Remember

1. PCOS means your period:
 - doesn't come every month
 - doesn't come at the same time every month, or
 - doesn't come at all.
2. A healthy lifestyle is the best way to improve your PCOS symptoms.
3. Talk to your health carer if you think you might have PCOS.



Thank you

Go to jeanhailes.org.au for more resources, videos and articles



For further information contact

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Disclaimer: This information does not replace medical advice. If a person is worried about their health, they should talk to their doctor or healthcare team.

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