

# Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

Private – only for women

# About this booklet

Jean Hailes for Women's Health 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 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 helped shape these resources.



Visit Jean Hailes at [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au)

Visit Congress at [www.caac.org.au](http://www.caac.org.au)

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

# Contents

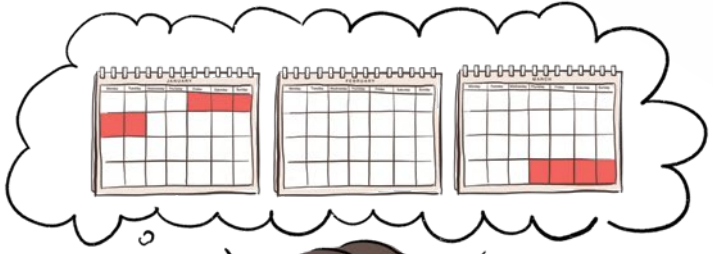
What's PCOS? .....	2
PCOS symptoms .....	4
PCOS can lead to other health issues.....	6
How do you know if you have PCOS?.....	8
Looking after yourself.....	10
Healthy eating .....	12
Be active.....	18
Healthy weight .....	20
Medicine .....	22
Remember .....	24
Notes.....	26

# What's PCOS?

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) means your period:

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

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



# PCOS symptoms

PCOS can cause:

- extra hair growing on your face, tummy or back
- pimples
- loss of hair on your head
- weight gain
- emotional problems
- trouble getting pregnant.



# PCOS can lead to other health issues

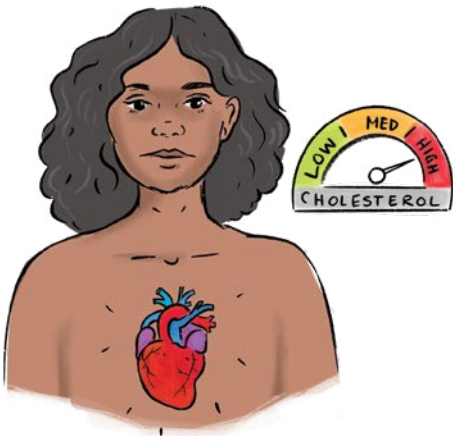
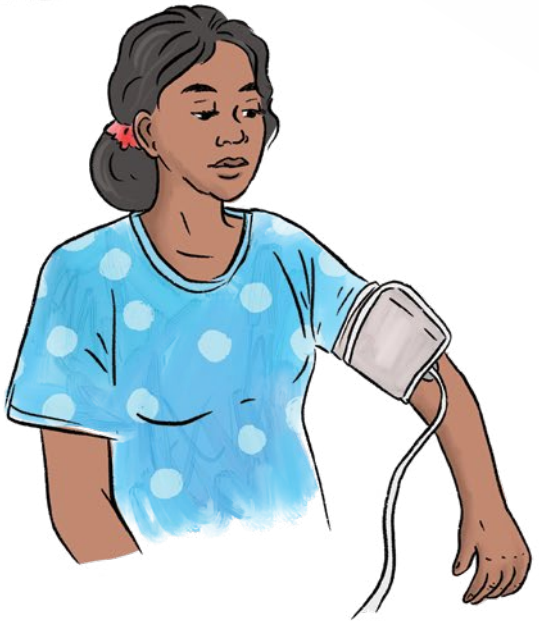
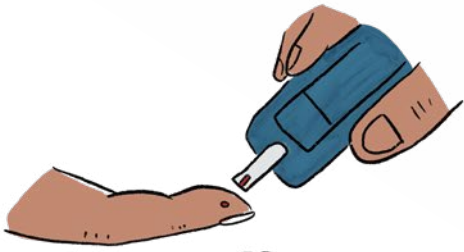
PCOS can lead to serious health conditions.

For example, you might get:

- diabetes
  - too much sugar in your blood
- high blood pressure
  - your blood pumps with too much force
- high cholesterol
  - too much fat in your blood.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol are bad for your heart.





# How do you know if you have PCOS?

If you have symptoms, talk to your health carer. Your health carer might be a doctor, nurse or health worker.

They will:

- ask how often you get your period
- ask about your symptoms like pimples or extra hair growing on your face, tummy or back
- do a blood test.

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



# Looking after yourself

If you live a healthy life, you can improve your symptoms and reduce your risk of getting other health issues.

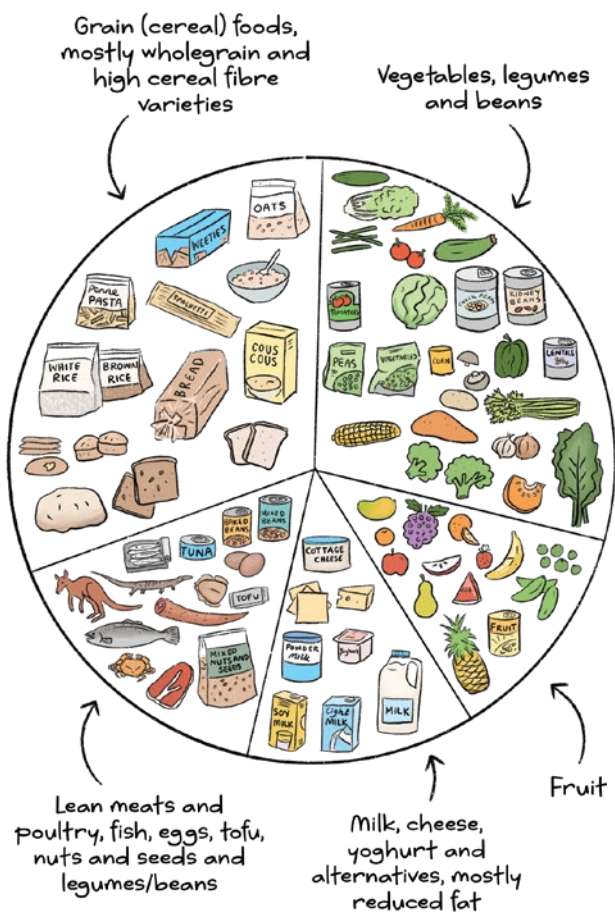
You can:

- eat healthy food
- be active
- lose some weight if you need to
- take medicine if you need to.



# Healthy eating

- Eat foods from the five food groups every day.
- Choose whole grains.  
For example, wholemeal bread instead of white bread.



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

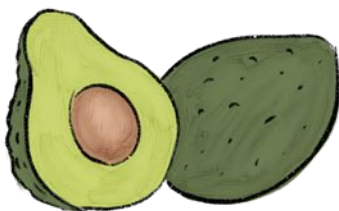
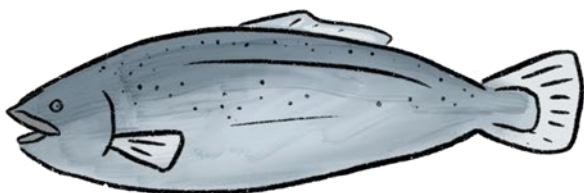
# Healthy eating

Include healthy fats in your diet.

For example:

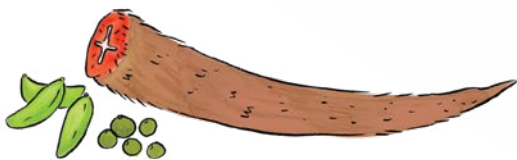
- salmon, tuna and sardines
- nuts and seeds
- avocado
- extra virgin olive oil.





# Healthy eating

- A healthy meal should be half vegetables, with some protein and some grains.
- Eat regular meals and snacks when you feel hungry.
- Eat less and only eat until you feel full.
- Drink mostly water or low-sugar drinks.



# Be active

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.

Talk to your health carer  
about how much activity you  
need to do 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.



# Medicine

- Some people with PCOS will also need medicine to stay healthy.
- Your health carer might ask you to take medicine for your PCOS.





# 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. Living a healthy life is the best way to improve your PCOS symptoms.
3. Talk to your health carer if you think you might have PCOS.



# Notes

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# About the artists



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.

## For further information contact

Jean Hailes for Women's Health  
PO Box 3367  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

**Phone** 03 9453 8999

**Email** [education@jeanhailes.org.au](mailto:education@jeanhailes.org.au)

**Website** [jeanhailes.org.au](http://jeanhailes.org.au)

**Disclaimer:** This information does not replace medical advice. If you are worried about your health, talk to your health carer.

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.

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