

# THE PCOS PLAYBOOK FOR HORMONES & FERTILITY

A DR. TAZ GUIDE

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

It is the new epidemic- women of all ages with escalating rates of PCOS or polycystic ovarian syndrome – battling the confusing range of symptoms; alopecia, acne, weight gain and infertility – just to name a few.

Infertility can be a painful struggle for many women – and the rates of infertility are increasing. Approximately **20% of women are unable to get pregnant while almost 26% have trouble carrying their pregnancy to term**. In practice, I find that undiagnosed PCOS is often the root of this infertility.

Most of these patients often go misdiagnosed for a period of time, because they don't fit the classical textbook picture that is taught in medical school; grossly overweight, balding and with acne. Most patients, I meet, including myself, have a more subtle version of these extremes.

[\*\*My PCOS story\*\*](#) is what led me to holistic and integrative medicine. Years of medical school, stress and emergency room work finally took their toll. I was tired, gaining weight, losing hair and having joint pain- but no one could figure this out.

In my search for my own answers, I found my passion and my calling- but now having practiced integrative and holistic medicine for over a decade, PCOS seems to be on the rise and women are still struggling with finding answers or missed diagnosis. And it not just a disease of young women - it affects women of every age – even in menopause.

# T H E N U M B E R S

Almost **5-10% of women are estimated to have diagnosed PCOS**, with African Americans, Latinas, and South Asians even higher percentages. Again, this is the number of actually diagnosed cases – there are many that are never diagnosed since their symptoms are not obvious.

# T H E S Y M P T O M S

I have found in practice that PCOS is on a spectrum, with some women having very mild symptoms, while others are more severe. **Here are the five most common symptoms of PCOS, along with the additional symptoms that are often missed:**



**Acne**- cystic acne in particular, on the neck and chin area or back



**Hair Loss** - thinning of hair and change in texture from coarse to thin - and then it falls out. Over time, separation of the part becomes more obvious, and the hair loss is classified as Grades 1-5 depending on width of the part at the vertex (tip of scalp)



**Irregular periods** - absent periods, skipped periods- these are often signs of PCOS.



**Pain with menstrual cycles** - the presence of ovarian cysts can make menstrual cycles incredibly painful- but usually the week before your period when the cyst enlarges. PCOS is often accompanied with fibroids or endometriosis, another sign that your hormones are not balanced. I often see PCOS, endometriosis and fibroids existing together.

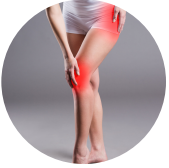


**Weight Gain** - Due to elevated insulin levels, PCOS sufferers, often gain weight and have trouble losing weight - much of this weight is around their abdomens but then accumulates in additional areas as the insulin resistance worsens.

**[Take the Weight Loss Quiz to find your Weight Loss Type.](#)**

# SURPRISING SYMPTOMS OF PCOS

Most of the symptoms listed above are more obvious. Here are some of the surprising symptoms of PCOS:



**Joint Pain** - many don't realize that PCOS is ultimately an autoimmune disease and the chronic inflammation triggered by hormone imbalances can also present as joint pain, one of the most common symptoms of inflammation.



**Fatigue**- The majority of my PCOS patients have a methylation issue, a genetic tendency to run low in B vitamins - which in turn are necessary for almost every hormone pathway in the body- and for energy.



**Belly Bloat** - Digestive symptoms are common with PCOS, including; belly bloat, IBS, constipation, and diarrhea. There is a reason for this- one arm of managing PCOS is understanding gut health. I often see both gluten intolerance and candida in my PCOS patients- foods tied to these concepts trigger leaky gut and malabsorption, which in turn leads to nutritional deficiencies and hormone imbalances.

**How to Kickstart Healthy Weight Loss for Women with a Belly Fix**  
**21- Day Belly Fix Course**



**Anxiety/ Depression** - There is mental health component to PCOS as well- many women I meet will have anxiety or depression. I think this is tied to both the methylation issues that cause low B vitamins and low antioxidants (including glutathione), along with the gut issues that affect the gut brain connection. (See how amazingly the body is connected?) Hormone imbalances also play into mental health- for example, low progesterone will often trigger anxiety, while high estrogen, fatigue.



**Infertility** - This may not be as surprising but PCOS is often the root cause of infertility. Many women trying to get pregnant never find the gut, hormone or nutritional imbalance that is preventing pregnancy. Many of these women also have high insulin levels which in turn block ovulation and trigger a spike in androgens- causing hair loss and acne.

Do you have any of these signs or symptoms of PCOS? Still not sure? Ask your doctor to check the following labs to help you nail the diagnosis.

## LABS TO FOLLOW WHEN OPTIMIZING FERTILITY AND DIAGNOSING PCOS

1. High Androgens- elevated total and free testosterone, dheas or 17OH progesterone.
2. High Fasting Insulin levels
3. Hgb a1c greater than 5.6 ( your blood sugar tracked over 3 mos)
4. High estrogen, estradiol
5. Low Progesterone
6. High Triglycerides
7. Low TSH, free t3 or t4
8. High amh
9. High LH: Fsh ratio
10. MTHFR, b vitamin status



# C H I N E S E M E D I C I N E D X

There are many patterns in Chinese Medicine that hint at the possibilities of PCOS. The liver meridian, responsible for the detoxification of hormones is central to the abnormalities seen with PCOS. The spleen meridian on the other hand, regulates digestion and can be the root issue of PCOS and insulin resistance. The gallbladder, which in conventional medicine we think of as a stand alone organ, is important in the Chinese Medical model. A sluggish gallbladder will in turn, affect the ability to digest fats, which will then drive up triglycerides and cause gut disturbances, then hormone imbalances.

## **Common TCM patterns for PCOS include:**

1. Liver meridian deficiency or liver blood stasis
2. Spleen meridian imbalance, Spleen Qi deficiency
3. Gallbladder Meridian deficiency or excess.

# A Y U R V E D I C M E D I C I N E D X

Most of the PCOS patients I meet are often like me, matching the Ayurvedic dosha, pitta. Driving, ambitious, high achievers, the pitta pattern in Ayurvedic medicine often hold stress in the gut, and the gut triggers the cascade of inflammation, hormone imbalances and “excessive heat.”

**[Find Your Powertype - Take the Powertype Quiz](#)**

## M A N A G I N G P C O S

Once you know you are on the PCOS spectrum, the next step is to understand the PCOS triangle- and personalize it to you. The gut- methylation- hormone cycle creates the PCOS spectrum, but your gut issues may be different from mine and your hormone imbalances distinct. Here are a few starting steps to get you on a path to healing your PCOS. Ultimately, you do want to work with a provider to customize a plan for you.

# D I E T

Diet and gut health are connected – ***eating a lot of sugar, refined carbohydrates or inflammatory foods like gluten and dairy can make PCOS symptoms worse.*** Your starting point; an anti inflammatory diet that adds more healthy fats, plant based foods and eliminates sugar, and a high intake of gluten and dairy.

## **Kick off better habits with the 10-Day Jumpstart!**

There are some PCOS patients that do benefit from a keto diet or intermittent fasting, but these diets need to be supervised by a health care provider and done only once hormone imbalances are resolved.





# S U P P L E M E N T S

Managing the PCOS triangle can be tricky and this is where supplements may be helpful. Increasing methylated B vitamins, like **Boost**, or balancing candida with the **Belly Fix** are parts of a PCOS treatment plan.

Controlling androgens without the use of medications, can be done with the right diet and overall lifestyle plan, but is difficult. Choline, inositol and maca are a few of the supplements, found in my product **Hormone Helper**, that help to manage the high androgens (testosterone, dheas, free testosterone, amh, 17 oh progesterone) that we often find in PCOS.

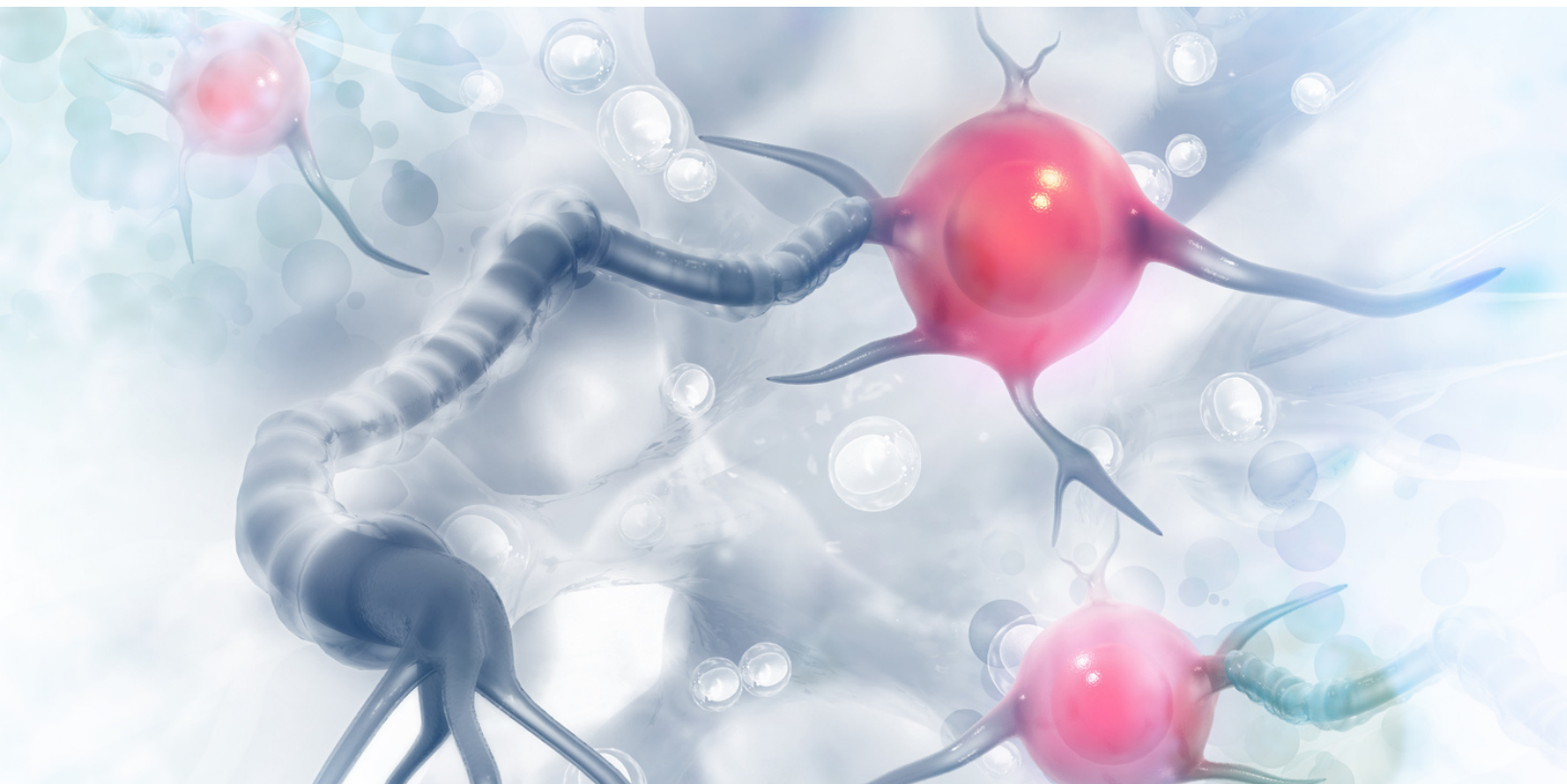


# H O R M O N E S

Hormone support also plays into PCOS management. Conventionally, birth control pills are usually used to shut down the hormone irregularity many women experience. But these never get to the root cause.

Bioidentical hormone therapy is often an option, with thyroid balancing, adrenal support and cortisol regulation all a part of a PCOS management plan.

This is why tracking your hormones is so important and why first tackling the gut and then the hormones is the preferred sequence when managing PCOS.





# M I N D   B O D Y

There is no doubt about the role of stress in PCOS and how the PCOS triangle is often activated due to stress – again I experienced this first hand. Stress drives cortisol production which in turn, drives insulin spikes, then androgens and then all your symptoms.

***Creating a mind body plan, and budgeting 2-3 hours per week for stress management, so that your cortisol level stays in check can help prevent the roller coaster of PCOS symptoms.*** My general rule is 20 minutes twice a day of meditation, mindfulness, prayer, or journaling paired with 1-2 appointments per week to help you lower stress; acupuncture, yoga, massage or even just getting outside.



## THE 20-MINUTE EMOTIONAL RESET

Twenty minutes in the morning is often the most doable, realistic, and opportune time to reset your nervous system. That means no checking your emails or social media right after you wake. Instead, set aside this early time of the day to connect to your energy center, to breathe from your diaphragm, and to center your thoughts. Try any of these!

### BREATHWORK

Our failure to breathe in all the way down to our diaphragms, expanding our belly and extending air down into our pelvis, is one of the primary drivers of cortisol dysfunction. Shallow or surface breathing increases the blood pressure and heart rate, triggers anxiety, and can ultimately lead to pelvic floor dysfunction. So, be sure to breathe like a baby does, expanding your stomach when breathing rather than raising your shoulders.

There are many different types of breathwork that you can try; just pick one and focus.

#### 4:7:8 Breath

*Controlled breathing with counts of 4, 7, and 8 is based on an ancient yogic technique called pranayama, and it's often done during yoga sessions. Here's how to do it:*

1. Close your lips and inhale silently through your nose for a count of 4.
2. Hold that breath for a count of 7.
3. Exhale slowly through your mouth, making a whooshing sound, for a count of 8.

#### Box Breathing

*This is a simple breathing technique whereby you breathe in counts of 4.*

1. Breathe in for a count of 4.
2. Hold for a count of 4.
3. Breathe out slowly for a count of 4.
4. Hold for a count of 4. Then start over.

#### Pursed Lip Breathing

*This type of breathing involves breathing in and out through pursed, slightly parted lips.*

1. Breathe in for 2 counts and out for 4 counts.

#### Alternate Nostril Breathing

*Breathing in through the nose while closing one nostril, then through the alternate nostril, helps to regulate breath and slow us down.*

### GUIDED MEDITATIONS

**If you find it hard to meditate, guided meditations can be helpful, especially those of us with busy brains or heavy hearts. Try one of these apps:**

Buddhify  
Calm  
Headspace: Meditations and Sleep  
Healthy Minds Program  
Insight Timer  
Live Awake Podcast  
Meditation Minis Podcast  
Mediation Oasis Podcast  
Simple Habit  
Unplug

### CORTISOL BALANCING YOGA

**A few yoga stretches can count toward your daily twenty minutes of cortisol-busting:**

Child's Pose  
Corpse Pose  
Downward Dog  
Happy Baby Pose  
Mountain Pose  
Prayer Pose  
Seated Forward Bend  
Seated Twist  
Tree Pose

### WEEKLY ENERGY REWIRING

**Fill your two-hour self-care weekly time slot with any of the following:**

Acupuncture  
Ayurvedic treatments —shriodhara, abhyangha  
Biking (not spinning)  
Craniosacral therapy  
Energy healing  
Golf  
Hiking  
Massage  
Reiki  
Swimming  
Yoga



# M E D I C A T I O N S

Conventional medicine does use a litany of medications to manage PCOS; metformin for insulin resistance, spironolactone for management of androgens, birth control pills to control estrogen, progesterone and testosterone – and more.

While some of these medications are needed, ***taking a comprehensive approach to PCOS is the ultimate win***, otherwise it's a game of medication bingo, as one medication works and then fails because the root cause was never addressed.

Merging different systems of medicine together helps us address both immediate issues and long term strategies – it is the best way forward.



# YOUR TOXIC LOAD

Last, but certainly not least, is your toxic load – the sum of the toxins you are exposed to every day. There are toxins in food, your makeup, hair products, our homes, and so much more.

These toxins aggregate over time, building up and weakening your liver. For those with methylation defects, the liver was weak to begin with, and at a tipping point, the liver gets sluggish, can't detox any further and hormone imbalances and weight gain begins.



# REDUCING YOUR TOXIC LOAD

## # 1 PHTHALATES

Found in household plastics, including tupperware, vinyl shower curtain liners, air freshners, cosmetics, and more. Made from petroleum - used to soften plastic and make it flexible.

### HEALTH RISKS

Pthalates disrupt hormones- affect the thyroid, estrogen and progesterone levels called a "gender bender" by some -feminizing men and masculinizing women.

### SWITCH UP

- Plug in air freshners for essential oils
- Plastic tupperware for glass containers
- Vinyl shower curtains for pthalate, pvc free shower curtains

## # 2 AMMONIA

Found in window cleaners, floor wax, counter cleaners, stainless steel cleaners, bathroom cleaners, toilet cleaners

Naturally occurring but higher concentration in cleaners

### HEALTH RISKS

Asthma, respiratory issues- skin, eye and throat irritation

### SWITCH UP

- Window cleaners for rubbing alcohol
- Floor cleaners for cedar and sage oil with vinegar mixtures
- Baking soda and vinegar for oven cleaners

# R E D U C I N G   Y O U R T O X I C   L O A D

## # 3 VOCS- VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS

Found in paint, wood preservers, carpet sealers, dry cleaned clothes, aerosol sprays, stored automotive products Gases emitted from solids and liquids

Fun fact- VOC levels in homes 2-5 x higher than outside of homes

### **HEALTH RISKS**

HA, Nausea, Allergies, Dizziness, Cancer, Muscle weakness

### **SWITCH UP**

- Paint- VOC free paint
- Discard stored fuel, automotive products
- Replace carpet cleaners, stain removers with salt, borax, vinegars

## # 4 LYE/ SODIUM HYDROXIDE

Found in oven cleaners, soaps, drain cleaners, aquarium tanks

Caustic salt- used since Egyptian civilization

### **HEALTH RISKS**

Skin, eye irritation, inhalation risk

### **SWITCH UP**

- Oven cleaner- baking soda
- Household soap- olive oil and castile soap combo



# R E D U C I N G   Y O U R T O X I C   L O A D

## # 5 CHLORINE

Found in household bleach, synthetic rubbers, shower water, refrigerators

### **HEALTH RISKS**

Inhalation, skin irritation, rashes, long term- focus, concentrations

### **SWITCH UP**

- Water for water filtration to remove excess chlorine
- Bleach for lemon juice or hydrogen peroxide

## # 6 PERC

Found in Drycleaning

### **HEALTH RISKS**

Memory loss, dizziness, lack of coordination- on list of known carcinogens

### **SWITCH UP**

- Drycleaning- home dry cleaning options, perc free
- Limit drycleaning

# R E D U C I N G   Y O U R T O X I C   L O A D

## # 7 TRICLOSAN

Found in household soaps, detergents, disinfectants, toothpaste

### **HEALTH RISKS**

Cancer causing agent, disrupts thyroid causes photo allergic contact dermatitis

### **SWITCH UP**

- Toothpaste- triclosan free (baking soda)
- Disinfectant for citrus oil - orange, lemongrass, thyme

## # 8 2 BUTOXYETHANOL

Found in soaps, cosmetics, cleaners and dry cleaning

### **HEALTH RISKS**

Known carcinogen, liver failure, depression

### **SWITCH UP**

- Drycleaning- home dry cleaning options, perc free
- Limit drycleaning

# R E D U C I N G   Y O U R T O X I C   L O A D

## # 9 ORGANOPHOSPHATES

Found in household pesticides- indoor and outdoor

### **HEALTH RISKS**

Neurological disorders, ADHD

### **SWITCH UP**

- DEET for lemon oil, citronella
- Put away food, seal containers
- Caulk and seal entry points

## # 10 PFOA – NONSTICK COOKWARE

Found in nonstick cookware

### **HEALTH RISKS**

Thyroid disease in children, cancer, pregnancy risks including preeclampsia and high cholesterol

### **SWITCH UP**

- Non stick for cast iron pans, stainless steel or new tech- thermalon

# YOUR FERTILITY AND PCOS CHECKLIST

## OPTIMIZE YOUR NUTRITION

Methyl b vitamins,  
Magnesium , Vitamin D,  
essential fatty acids,  
amino acids, iron

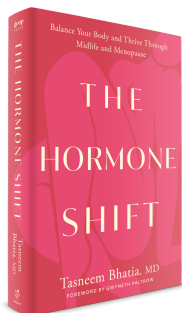
## REPAIR THE GUT

Identify food allergies,  
intolerances, repair the  
gut lining using  
glutamine or Belly Fix  
and reduce Candida

## IDENTIFY YOUR HORMONE PATTERNS AND CHECK YOUR HORMONES

### Hormone Pattern List:

Estrogen Dominance  
High Androgens  
High Insulin  
Subclinical Thyroid  
Low Progesterone  
High Leptin  
High Cortisol  
HPA Dysfunction



Optimizing your fertility, identifying PCOS signs and symptoms and balancing your hormones are critical for young women – learn more about what women at every decade need to be thinking about in my latest book, **[The Hormone Shift](#)**.

Available on [doctortaz.com](https://doctortaz.com) and everywhere books are sold.