

The naturopathic advisor



Naturally Good Health has teamed up with experts from the College of Naturopathic Medicine to answer some of your burning health questions. This issue, you asked:



Q PCOS – what is it and what can I do to help my hormones?

Polycystic ovarian syndrome is an imbalance of the hormonal system identified by multiple cysts developing on the surface

of the ovaries.

PCOS is more prominent in women of reproductive age, with many women unaware that they suffer from the illness as it often goes undiagnosed until fertility problems arise. The symptoms of PCOS can vary from woman to woman, but the most common include:

- Excess facial hair.
- Acne.
- Weight gain (especially around tummy).
- Irregular/no periods.
- Mood swings.
- Cravings.
- Male-pattern baldness.
- Insulin resistance (where the

body produces insulin but does not use it adequately).

The causes of PCOS are unknown, but there are links to high testosterone levels, insulin resistance and genetic factors.

● **Reduce sugar:** Eating a diet high in refined sugar causes insulin to be released more regularly by the body. This can stimulate the ovaries to produce excess testosterone, which contributes to PCOS symptoms, such as acne, facial hair and weight gain.

● **Increase omega 3 fats:** Omega 3s are important for PCOS as they can stop the cell walls from hardening. If they harden, the insulin receptors can become

unresponsive, which can lead to insulin resistance, common in PCOS sufferers.

● **Exercise:** Exercise is vital for overall health and it is especially important for PCOS sufferers. It plays a part in improving insulin resistance, it can help reduce weight gain associated with PCOS and it is important in excreting excess hormones.



Your question has been answered by Nutritional Therapist and College of Naturopathic Medicine graduate, Emma O'Connor, who specialises in hormonal health. For information on CNM training in a range of natural health therapies, available in Ireland and beyond, visit www.naturopathy.ie

Summer body – summer travel kit

Ensure you have your natural health essentials on hand for all first aid issues.

When setting off on a trip, whether it's a staycation, festival or somewhere abroad, it's important to be prepared for any little ailments that may crop up.

If you or anyone around you gets muscle ache, *Arnica montana* may be able to help. Traditionally renowned for healing bruises, this lovely plant can also help ease aches, pains, sprains and strains. Look for a gel format, made from fresh extracts, ideally in a tube, handy to carry around. Another tip for those prone to problematic pains is to eat alkalising foods, such as fresh fruit and veg, wholegrain brown rice and millet, and drink plenty of water.

When going abroad, many of us can experience stomach problems. Constipation can be caused by factors such as a change in diet or the stress of travelling. Try a bulking agent such as linseed, preferably in a form that's paired with an effective laxative such as Senna or Cascara. This should only be necessary short term, but will ease things along until your gut falls into a healthier rhythm. Drinking plenty of water, particularly warm water, is good for a stuck gut.

Sneezing and sniffing your way through your holiday? The herb, Luffa, is excellent at reducing hay fever-type reactions in the nose, eyes and throat. It works quickly and doesn't become less effective if you use it long-term. It can be found as a tincture, a tablet and a nasal spray. Vitamin C is a natural antihistamine, so take small doses regularly throughout the day. You can also step up your intake of foods containing natural sources of vitamin C, such as apples, kiwi fruit, raspberries, blueberries and citrus fruit, as well as peppers, tomatoes and green, leafy vegetables.

In order to keep the immune system in prime condition whilst away, try an Echinacea tincture made from extracts of herb and root of *Echinacea purpurea*. In this format, Echinacea has a triple action; antiviral, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory, overall very supportive for the immune system. Furthermore, keep refined sugar out of reach, in all its shapes and forms. It competes with vitamin C, and vitamin C supports good immune function.

If you're unfortunate enough to have super-sensitive skin, which reacts to the slightest thing, being around nibbling insects can prove to be a



nightmare. Some people seem to attract biting bugs like moths to a flame. Bites are unsightly, annoying and often incredibly itchy, not to mention painful! Your friend in this instance is the Neem tree. When entering insect territory or indeed insect season, cover yourself with insect repellent, redolent of Neem. If you do get bitten, rub a cream made from Neem onto the affected area to promote healing and counter inflammation.

Whether you're climbing the highest of hills or sitting on a plane for hours, stiff or overworked legs need some TLC and it's important to keep the blood flow going, particularly if on a long-haul flight. It is, therefore, worth carrying horse chestnut gel around with you. Horse chestnut extracts in a gel format are ideal for soothing tired, heavy legs. Horse chestnut contains important therapeutic elements, including aescin, which has a toning effect on the venous wall.