

# PCOS: 10 Important Numbers to Know

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a complex hormonal condition that affects many women of all ages. While managing PCOS can be challenging, understanding a few key numbers can help women with PCOS take control of their health and well-being.

 by Dr. Shabnam Das Kar MD



# 1. Body Composition

While total body weight and BMI are commonly used to assess health, they are not always the best indicators for women with PCOS. Instead, it is important to focus on body composition, which is the distribution of body fat and lean muscle mass. Women with PCOS may have a higher percentage of body fat and a lower percentage of lean muscle mass.

Lean muscle mass helps to utilize blood glucose and improve insulin sensitivity. In addition, building muscle through exercise can lead to a healthier body composition and improve overall metabolic health.

A body composition analysis can provide important insights, such as the percentage of fat, muscle, and water in the body. This information can help guide dietary and exercise choices to support a healthy weight and metabolic function. Women with PCOS may need to pay special attention to their body composition, as the condition can make it more difficult to maintain a healthy balance.



## 2. Waist To Height Ratio-Belly Fat

For women with PCOS, maintaining a healthy waist circumference in relation to their height is essential. **The ideal ratio is for the waist circumference to be no more than half of the height.**

This ratio is a better indicator of metabolic health than BMI alone, as it takes into account the distribution of body fat, which can be a key concern for those with PCOS.



# 3. Fasting Blood Glucose

Fasting blood glucose is a crucial metric for women with PCOS, as the condition is often associated with insulin resistance and an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Ideally, fasting blood glucose levels should be between 70 and 99 mg/dL (3.9 to 5.5 mmol/L).

It is better to aim for the lower end of the blood glucose range.





## 4. Should you measure blood insulin levels?

In women with PCOS, the underlying problem is insulin resistance. Some women with insulin resistance may **have high fasting insulin levels while others have low fasting insulin**. Therefore, a normal or low fasting insulin level may not be the best indicator of your pancreatic health.



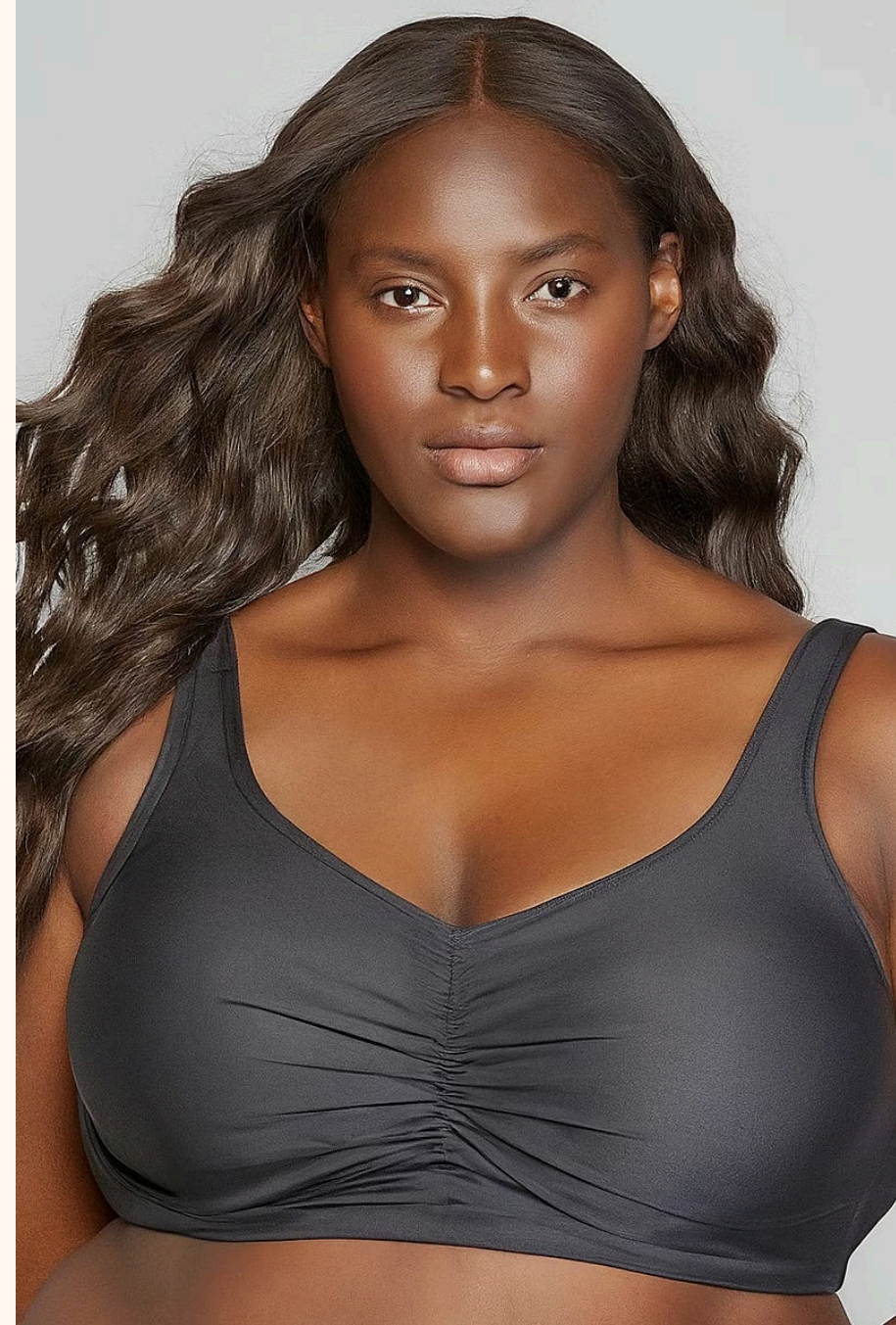
# 5. Thyroid Function Tests

Thyroid dysfunction is common in women with PCOS, and regular thyroid function tests can help identify and manage any issues. The key thyroid markers to monitor are thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), free T4, and free T3, thyroid antibodies (Anti TPO and Anti Thyroglobulin Antibodies)

Optimal ranges can vary, but generally, TSH should be between 0.5 and 5.0 mIU/L, free T4 between 0.8 and 1.8 ng/dL, and free T3 between 2.3 and 4.2 pg/mL.

Ideally thyroid antibody levels should be zero. High thyroid antibody levels indicate Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, an autoimmune condition, where your immune system is attacking your thyroid organ.

**If you have high thyroid antibody levels, not eating gluten-containing food can help to reduce thyroid antibody levels.**



# 6. Hours of Continuous Sitting

## 1 Limit Sedentary Time

Women with PCOS should aim to limit their total time spent in continuous, uninterrupted sitting to no more than 2-3 hours in a day.

Prolonged periods of sitting can have negative effects on metabolic health, reduce muscle mass, raise blood glucose levels and increase inflammation, which are key concerns for those with PCOS.

## 2 Incorporate Movement Microbreaks

Finding ways to incorporate more movement throughout the day, such as going for walking meetings, using a sit-stand desk, or going for short walking breaks, stretching, doing wall pushes can be beneficial for women with PCOS.

Walking for 10-15 minutes just after a meal has shown lower blood glucose levels.

This can help them maintain a healthier balance between sedentary and active time.

# 7. Daily Protein Intake

Adequate protein intake is essential for women with PCOS, as it can regulate blood sugar (glucose) levels, build muscle mass and promote feelings of fullness.

The recommended daily protein intake depends on factors such as age, activity level, and overall health goals.

You should aim for 1 to 1.2 grams of protein per kg of body weight per day, divided over 2-3 meals. You will need higher amounts if you are more physically active.





## 8. How much carbohydrates should you eat in a day?

Your carbohydrate-insulin metabolism decides your personal carbohydrate threshold, basically how much starchy food your body can metabolize and not make you gain fat.

For some people it is as little as 20 grams of carbohydrates a day. Any higher amount prevents fat loss.

Curious about your daily carb intake? Discover the exact amount with an online calculator.

**A ketogenic diet, which helps women with PCOS lose weight, improve mood and fertility, includes only 20 grams of carbs a day.** One apple has 20 grams of carbs.

Bread, pasta, rice, roti, potatoes, cakes, pizza, burgers all grains, contain high amounts of carbohydrates.





## 9. Number of meals and snacks in a day

The more times you eat, the higher your blood glucose and insulin levels can remain. Therefore, it is better to eat 2-3 nutritious meals in a day rather than having multiple meals and snacks. This approach can help maintain more stable blood glucose and insulin levels and improve your mood.





## 10. High-Sensitivity C-Reactive Protein (Hs-CRP)

High-sensitivity C-reactive protein (Hs-CRP) is a marker of inflammation in the body, and it is often elevated in women with PCOS.

Ideally, Hs-CRP levels should be less than 1 mg/L, as higher levels can be associated with an increased risk of mood disorders, infertility, heart disease and difficulty losing fat.

By monitoring Hs-CRP and taking steps to manage inflammation, such as through food, better sleep, movement and building stress resilience, women with PCOS can improve their overall health.



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