

# FACT OR FICTION: PCOS MYTHS DEBUNKED

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is the most common hormonal condition among women of reproductive age. Symptoms can include an increase of male hormone (androgen), excess hair growth on the face or body, acne, and weight gain or difficulty losing weight. The Hormone Health Network is here to debunk common misconceptions about PCOS!

## MYTH 1

All Women with PCOS have Ovarian Cysts

Based on its name, many people think PCOS refers to cysts, but this is false. For many women, tiny follicles are present in the ovary and may resemble a “strand of pearls” on an ultrasound. The follicles may look like small cysts, but they are very different. These follicles aren’t cancerous and do not cause pain. Not all women diagnosed with PCOS have follicles on their ovaries.

## MYTH 2

Women Diagnosed with PCOS Can’t Have Children

PCOS is a common cause of fertility problems for women, but that doesn’t mean carrying a pregnancy to term is impossible. Many women with PCOS can conceive on their own or with the help of fertility treatments. Lifestyle changes and a healthier diet can also improve the chances of conceiving.

## MYTH 3

An Irregular Menstrual Cycle Means You Have PCOS

PCOS is one cause of an irregular menstrual cycle, but there are so many other reasons! Typical cycles range between 21 to 35 days. Other factors such as stress, thyroid disorders or other endocrine conditions, fibroids, or extreme dieting can lead to an irregular cycle. If your cycle is irregular, speak to a doctor. Additional tests and exams will identify the cause.

## MYTH 4

Women with PCOS Can’t Lose Weight

Weight loss may be harder for women with PCOS, but it’s not impossible. Many women with PCOS have a lowered sensitivity to insulin, a hormone that regulates sugar in the blood. This is known as insulin resistance, which is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes and may make it difficult to lose weight, even if you are following a healthy lifestyle. Working with a registered dietician and endocrinologist can also help with weight loss goals.

## MYTH 5

All Women with PCOS Experiences Unwanted Hair Growth

Hirsutism is excessive growth of “male” pattern hair that may appear on a woman’s face, back, chest, abdomen, or thighs. Hirsutism is usually an underlying sign of PCOS or another endocrine condition, but it’s important to remember not every woman will have this symptom. Other factors, such as ethnicity, can increase the likelihood of a woman having excess hair growth.



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**Patients have questions. We have answers.**

The Hormone Health Network is your trusted source for endocrine patient education. Our free, online resources are available at [hormone.org](http://hormone.org).

