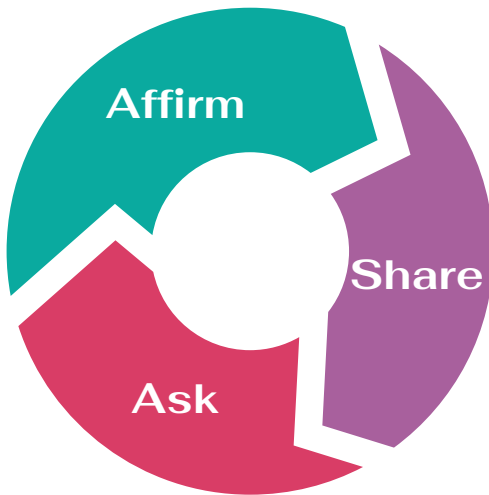


# Talking about PCOS

## A Guide for Health Care Professionals



PCOS is a complex condition that is experienced differently by each patient. When having conversations about PCOS with patients or clients, it is important to take a shared decision-making approach that explores patient preferences in the context of their goals and values and provides relevant information that the patient can understand and integrate into their lives.



Shared Decision-Making is associated with :

- high levels of patient satisfaction,
- improved engagement in and continuity of health care, and
- improved patient outcomes and health status.

It can be helpful to follow the **Affirm-Share-Ask (ASA)** model of person-centered communication when talking with your patients/clients about PCOS.

Remember, ASA is a repeating cycle that you will complete multiple times within a conversation.

## Affirm

“Having hair in places you don’t want can be really frustrating and upsetting, and I’m sorry that you have to deal with that! With treatment, we may be able to reduce that hair growth.”

When your patient/client asks a question or shares a feeling or experience, first acknowledge or affirm what they have said. Recognize that your patients may come with past trauma, including stigma and judgment. Acknowledgment and affirmation must be genuine!



Show empathy by taking the time to listen



Highlight positive areas or strengths



Validate feelings and experiences



Use caring and engaged body language



Recognize unconscious biases in yourself and the clinical setting

## Special Considerations for Talking about Weight



Conversations about weight gain/loss can be particularly challenging and have the potential to alienate your patients/clients.

- Ask for permission to discuss weight. Ask the patient about their goals and priorities around weight.
- If weight is impacting overall health, share this information with patients in a nonjudgmental way.
- Remember that PCOS makes it more difficult to lose weight. Strategies that might work for other patients may not result in weight loss for those with PCOS.
- Eating disorders are 3x more likely with PCOS. When weight loss is a priority for the patient, focus on meeting nutrient requirements and increasing movement, rather than calorie restriction.

# Share

“There are treatments for PCOS and its effects on your body. Different treatments work for different people, and sometimes finding the treatment that works best for you can take trial and error. It can take months to see the results.”

Providing relevant information is critical to giving people the tools they need to make informed choices about their health. Information is more relevant when it aligns with the patient’s goals, priorities and experiences. If you are unsure, ask permission to share information.



Use plain, clear and specific language. Avoid being vague.



Recognize that priorities change with time. Explore the patient’s priorities at each visit - don’t make assumptions about what is important to them.



Avoid words that convey judgment.



Be honest with the patient about what you know and don’t know - when unsure, make plans to follow-up with the patient with more information.



Use the teach-back method to ensure the patient understands the information.

# Ask

After sharing information, asking a follow-up question can ensure that the patient/client has understood new content, clarify any remaining questions and priorities, and reveal knowledge gaps or misunderstandings.

