

Ginny: Living with PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome)

Ginny: I've been an athlete almost my entire life, ended up being an award-winning athlete and even almost played in college. So this is really who I am. This is what I identify as.

I became a phys-ed teacher for a while because I wanted to be able to share this joy of movement with other people. For myself, I took up running and I found that it was a brilliant way for me to combat the anxiety that I started experiencing with PCOS.

I first found out I had PCOS when I was 18. I wasn't given much information on it except for the fact that I might have issues having children later on in life.

When you're diagnosed with PCOS, you meet two of three criteria. Either you have polycystic ovaries, which means there's many different little cysts on your ovaries. You can have high androgens, or you have amenorrhea, which are missed menstrual cycles.

I've always found it interesting that you don't have to have cysts on your ovaries to have polycystic ovary syndrome. For me, it's a tough definition because to me, it's all-encompassing. It's affected every part of my life.

After my husband and I got married, we decided we wanted to start working on a family. We found that it was quite difficult. It took about five years of fertility treatments to get pregnant with our first child.

Mike Silvestro: Just the long-standing timeline of having the babies definitely took an emotional toll on both of us, but especially Ginny. That's sort of when I started seeing the effects of PCOS on my wife.

Ginny: There were times where we'd go through the fertility treatments maybe three or four months, and I'm like, "I have to take a break. It's too much of a toll on my body." I remember the first six months in, it just brought me to my knees, like, "Why is this not happening? My body is dealing with so much." And there were times when my husband's had to pull me up off the floor because it was so hard. We wanted a child so bad and it just wasn't happening.

Mike: My wife is probably the strongest woman I've ever met in my life; and you just have to be there for them in whatever capacity they need you to be there.

Ginny: As I've gotten older and closer to my late thirties and forties, my PCOS has changed my life quite a bit.

It would've been nice if people would tell me it wasn't just about fertility. PCOS is a metabolic issue, so if you're not eating balanced, then that can cause some problems with your hormones, which will in turn make it difficult for you to get pregnant. It would've just been nice to have that knowledge.

I think it would've changed my journey entirely.

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Throughout my years with PCOS, I've dealt with some anxiety and depression. There's a direct correlation to having PCOS and dealing with those mental health issues. It's hard when you're working every single day to do the best that you can for your body and your body's not responding the way that it should. So it has in the past put me in places where I've become depressed.

I started to document my own journey about 10 years ago online, just kind of what I was doing with exercise and being very vocal about me being a person with PCOS, but look at what I can do.

Hey, Jess. How are you?

Jess: Good. How are you, Ginny?

Ginny: All right. Anything that we should worry about today? Your body feeling all right?

About eight years ago, I became a personal trainer who specializes in working with patients with PCOS. It helps them manage their symptoms. I help them learn more about this chronic illness and teach them different resources that they can use to help better manage their body.

Excellent. You can stop right there. Go grab your medium band and I'll show you exactly what we're doing today.

It's more of a gentle form of personal training than what you would see if you went to the gym where it's push, push, push, push, push. Instead, it's what can your body do today? How are you feeling mentally? And that might change tomorrow, but that's okay because we're going to give you grace.

'Looks good. How we feeling?'

Jess: "Got a sweat going on!"

Ginny: It's been shown that there's a 50% chance that my kids can also have PCOS, so I keep a very close eye out on all three of my kids.

It's become a genuine concern of mine because I don't want my children to go through what I've been through my entire life.

So we've been very proactive here. My kids all work out with me and they see me do it for so long. It's been almost 10, 15 years of me working out in front of them, and it's created such a positive relationship with us, but it's also created a positive relationship with exercise for them.

Mike: I think she's morphed a bit over the years too. I want to say she's less angry towards the condition. She is managing through the symptoms as best she can, and she's helping people.

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Ginny: At this point in my life now, I'm working with people every single day that have PCOS and helping them manage their symptoms and addressing different issues that are coming up for them.

It's been so fulfilling to be able to do something like that in my life for something that was so harsh in my lifetime, to be able to turn it around and just make it something positive.