



# ARE YOU AN ATHLETE CONSIDERING PREGNANCY?

Your health prior to pregnancy can influence your chances of becoming pregnant and the health and development of your baby.



## MEDICAL AND DENTAL CHECK-UPS

Prioritise an appointment with your Sports Doctor or General Practitioner to discuss;

- > Your **pregnancy plan**
- > How to best manage **health conditions** you have
- > Recommended **testing** for potential genetic conditions
- > **Vaccines** you might need to update
- > Your contraceptive method (including **hormonal contraception**), and how it can impact the time it takes to get pregnant
- > **The safety of medications and supplements** you are taking
- > Supplements you might consider such as folate, iodine, iron and vitamin D
- > Whether you are up to date with cervical screening and breast examinations
- > Whether medications or supplements you are prescribed do not contain prohibited substances.

You should also consider an appointment with your Sports Doctor or General Practitioner if you;

- > Have been having regular unprotected sex for 12 months, (or 6 months if over 35 years) trying to conceive and have not become pregnant.
- > Miss 3 or more consecutive periods, in the absence of pregnancy, menopause or taking hormonal contraception.
- > You are experiencing short, long or irregular menstrual cycles, or painful periods.
- > You have concerns or questions about your reproductive health, fertility or preparing for pregnancy.

Visit your dentist for a check-up, as pregnancy and morning sickness can worsen existing dental problems.



## NUTRITION AND WEIGHT

A sports dietician can help you manage and optimise your nutrition for training and pregnancy.

- > A well-balanced diet including fresh fruits and vegetables and unprocessed foods will help prepare for a healthy pregnancy.
- > Pregnancy requires a higher intake of specific nutrients such as iron and calcium, and as an athlete you will already have higher requirements of these and other nutrients. Are you an athlete considering pregnancy?
- > Being above or below a healthy weight may make it harder to get pregnant, so addressing this early is essential.
- > Iron deficiency is very common in female athletes, and low iron can reduce your chances of becoming pregnant. You should get your iron levels checked and if required, consider an iron supplement and increasing your food-based iron intake.
- > Limit caffeine consumption to 200 mg/day (~2 cups of coffee).



## SUPPLEMENTS

- > Folic acid and iodine are needed for the development of a baby's nervous system and brain. A daily supplement should ideally be started at least 3 months prior to pregnancy. You should have at least 500 micrograms of folate and 150 micrograms of iodine per day.
- > As an athlete, checking your supplements is your responsibility and you should ensure that these supplements do not contain prohibited substances.



## PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Pelvic floor exercises are recommended before, during and after pregnancy as they can help to preserve your pelvic floor health. Speak with your sports physiotherapist early, to find a women's health physiotherapist that understands your sport demands as well as pregnancy plans.



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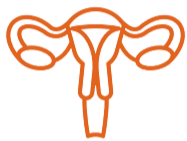
### MENTAL HEALTH

Trying to get pregnant and pregnancy itself, can have an impact on your mental health. Having the support of people you trust is important. Make your support and medical team (psychologist, psychiatrist, GP, sports medical practitioner and psychologist) aware of your plans, so they can provide you with any support you need.



### TRAVEL

If you have plans to travel, speak to your Sports Doctor or General Practitioner about the latest travel advice and vaccinations for the location you are travelling to. Some travel associated infections can cause miscarriage and impact your pregnancy.



### MENSTRUAL CYCLE

- > Menstrual abnormalities in athletes are common, however they are not normal.
- > An energy imbalance (how much you are eating and how much energy you are expending), medications, stress, and medical conditions, such as endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome, can impact your menstrual cycle. All of these conditions can impact your chances of pregnancy.
- > Menstrual cycle tracking can be a useful way of understanding your cycle.
- > Further information on these menstrual cycle abnormalities can be found on the AIS FPHI website.



### AVOID

Alcohol, smoking and illicit drugs.



### YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Encourage your partner/donor to make healthy lifestyle choices.  
Ensure you are optimising your sleep and recovery.



### EXERCISE CONSIDERATIONS

There is **NO** need for any exercise modifications prior to pregnancy. Current evidence suggests that exercise does not increase the risk of miscarriage, or harm the health of the foetus, even among women who typically engage in high volume/high intensity exercise.

**This factsheet does not replace individualised medical advice.**

#### Contributors

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#### References

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