

Female Athlete Health

Medical Information for Scottish Gymnastic athletes

There are aspects of being a female athlete that need special consideration in order to maintain and maximise health and performance. Here are some key points to help guide you:



1 Why is it important?

We know there are a number of medical conditions that are more common in female athletes and that normal hormonal variations during menstrual cycles can affect some athletes more than others.

There is some evidence that these hormonal changes can have an influence on developing injuries, adaptation to training and overall performance so having a good understanding of your own body is essential.

2 Talk about it

Menstrual monitoring and management is a very normal part of the medical assessment and care of female athletes.

Relating discussion to performance, ensuring comfortable environments for group or individual discussions and developing trusting relationships amongst athlete and support staff will enable information sharing. There are lots of options for medical support for menstrual problems.



3 Know what's normal for you

Knowing what your normal cycle is is very helpful for establishing patterns/cycle length and associated symptoms. It will help determine if there is a change and can guide an approach to your training and competition. Using apps like period tracker light or clue makes this easy and allows sharing with the appropriate support personnel.

Source:

Dr Carrie McCrea-Routray
Sports Physician
Scottish Gymnastics



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4 Energy availability

With high training loads can come high energy demands especially through adolescent years when your body is growing. If there is a mismatch it can lead to period abnormalities, injury, illness and even weakening of the bones. Some athletes can feel some pressure to look a certain way which can affect eating patterns and training habits.



5 Options for managing periods

There are a number of ways to manage menstrual cycles ranging from types of contraception such as combined pills, mini pills, implants and injections to non contraceptive hormonal tablets. For non medication methods this involves assessing the symptoms and menstrual cycle alongside training and competition programmes.

6 When to seek medical attention

- If you have had no periods at all and you are 16 or over
- If you have had longer than three months without a period
- If you have symptoms associated with your periods you are struggling with or are affecting your performance
- If you have any concerns about your eating, weight or self image
- You feel you need advice on managing your periods



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