



If you have problems related to your menstrual cycle, you can learn ways to manage it so that it does not interfere with your training and competition.

BE FIT TO PLAY, PERIOD

What Is A "Normal" Menstrual Cycle?

You can try to avoid it, but women are designed to have menstrual cycles. Each woman experiences her cycle in her own way. For some, it is like a painful roller coaster ride, while others sail through with no trouble. Menstruation is critical to hormone regulation which affects multiple body systems including bone and muscle health.



The normal cycle is bleeding (a "PERIOD") that occurs every 21-35 days when the membrane lining of the uterus is shed and renewed. Bleeding can last 2-7 days and may be heavy or light. Frequent travel, stress, weight loss, certain medications & overtraining can cause changes in the length & amount of flow of your period. See your doctor if your cycle changes.

Cramps

What can YOU do about painful menstrual cramps? Plenty!

No athlete should miss training or competition due to cramps, as there are many effective treatments available.

- The pain comes from contractions of smooth muscle in the uterus. You may feel pain in the lower abdomen, back, or thighs.
- Heat (heat pad, warm shower/bath, or drinking warm beverages), relaxation, (meditation, yoga, mindfulness) & a gentle massage may help ease your symptoms.
- Medications that block the chemicals (prostaglandins) that actually cause your cramps can also help.
 - These include over-the-counter medicines such as Ibuprofen (Advil) an anti-inflammatory, or acetaminophen (Tylenol) an analgesic if anti-inflammatory medicine does not help.
 - Stay ahead of the pain. These medications are most effective if you start taking them as soon as you feel the pain and continue to take them throughout your period.
 - Check with your doctor to find the right medicine, dose, and best method for you.



What about using birth control pills?

- These medications are not just for birth control.
- Many athletic women take these Oral Contraceptives to help manage cramps, PMS & acne.
- Discuss their use with your doctor, as you will need a prescription for these.
- All medicine you take must comply with the Tennis Anti-Doping Program.
- Check with IDTM BEFORE you take any medications.



Pre-Menstrual Syndrome

Is PMS (Pre-Menstrual Syndrome) real? Absolutely!

- It occurs before your period with physical changes and mood swings.
- It is due to changes in female hormones that occur before the bleeding starts.
- You may feel bloated, gain weight, and have headaches, breast tenderness, or acne.
- You may experience MOOD CHANGES: feeling irritable one minute and very depressed the next.
- The good news is that there are solutions available to help you manage your PMS.

Women's Business

Are there effective treatments for PMS? Yes--don't give up hope!

- Take 1200 mg of calcium (3-4 serves of calcium-rich foods) every day of the month.
- Reduce your intake of salt, sugar, caffeine (contained in tea, coffee, and cola drinks) & alcohol.
- Discuss stress management techniques such as relaxation with your health care providers.
- If these solutions do not help, have a medical checkup and discuss other possible treatments (such as medications) with your doctor.



Amenorrhea

Are there effective treatments for PMS? Yes--don't give up hopes it normal for menstrual cycles to STOP when you are training hard? NO!!

- Research has shown that it is NOT NORMAL for periods to stop (called Amenorrhea) during heavy training.
- Amenorrhea may be due to an underlying medical problem, overtraining, inadequate nutrition, or emotional stress.
- Amenorrhea has SERIOUS effects on your body; it can cause loss of bone mass (Osteoporosis) and increase the risk of Stress Fractures in young athletes.

What should YOU do if your periods STOP or CHANGE?

- If you stop menstruating for 3 months, or have less than 7 periods in a year, see your doctor IMMEDIATELY for a complete medical check-up.
- While you are not having your periods, increase the calcium in your diet to 1500 mg. a day, so you keep your calcium levels balanced.
- Calcium containing foods include: dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream), soybean products (tofu, soy milk), fish with small bones (canned salmon and sardines), oranges, and broccoli.
- Aim for 5 servings of calcium per day to reach 1500 mg (300 g calcium = 1 serve).
- One serving of calcium = 250 ml (a glass) of regular or low-fat milk; 200 ml (small tub) of yogurt; 35 g cheddar cheese; 6 oranges; 100g canned salmon; and 1 kg of broccoli!



"A FIT WOMAN IS FIT FOR EVERYTHING. THE FITNESS OF OUR BODY FUELS THE CONFIDENCE IN OUR SOULS. WE ARE FIT TO TOSS OUR CHILDREN IN THE AIR OR THROW CAUTION TO THE WIND. WE ARE FIT TO RUN, WE ARE FIT TO WIN."

-AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Gynecology

When should you see a doctor for a female (gynecological) exam?

- A Pap smear is a quick, painless test performed by your doctor during a pelvic exam.
- Pap smears should begin at age 21 and then be rechecked every 3 years.
- You should also have a gynecological check-up if you have any symptoms or changes in your cycle.
- The doctor will check for any problems, help you with the management of symptoms and give you individual advice.

How do you perform a successful SELF BREAST EXAM?

- Every woman (young and old) should learn how to check her breasts.
- The goal is for you to get to know what your own breasts feel like.
- Recheck your breasts each month after your period ends to see if you find anything different from the previous month.
- If you have questions on how to perform an exam, you can learn how at the time of your annual physical exam or ask your doctor to show you.



For more information on female exams and breast self examination, read the topic, "Female Body: An Owner's Manual."