

# HPSNZ | SPORT NZ | Raise My Game | Performance Pathways



  
HIGH PERFORMANCE  
SPORT NEW ZEALAND



## Women's Health

- Understands the importance of menstrual cycles and the role hormones play in recovery, bone, and overall health.
- Is knowledgeable about menstruation and what is normal.
- Knows when to ask for help in relation to pain, bleeding, or other menstruation symptoms. Feels confident to be able to manage symptoms well.
- Can identify the key markers for menstrual health and knows who to contact if she notices any problems.
- Understands that contraception is a choice and is well-informed about the full range of choices available. Knows where to seek help, and has the information and support to make contraception decisions.
- Is aware of common female health issues such as premenstrual syndrome, dysmenorrhea (very painful menstruation), menorrhagia (very frequent or heavy menstruation, amenorrhea (not starting periods until after age 16 or missing more than three periods in a row), endometriosis, and polycystic ovarian syndrome.
- Has positive support from coach/sport to talk about and manage women's health issues.

## Understanding balanced health

# Female-specific needs in sport



Research gap



Females are different



Menstrual cycle



Female puberty



Injury risks and challenges



Social, emotional and cultural needs - in and out of sport



### Consider this

Understanding female health is critical to being able to respond to the needs of young women and provide support for them to be physically active in a way that promotes their health and wellbeing.

## Understanding balanced health

# Benefits when there is balance in sport

Within the right environment, participation in sport has positive effects on physical, mental and social wellbeing.



### Benefits for physical wellbeing

- Increased neuromuscular, cardiovascular and respiratory function
- Improved immune system
- Improved metabolism
- Optimal bone health
- Prevention of chronic disease



### Benefits for mental wellbeing

- Increased self esteem and body confidence
- Improved mood and concentration
- Improved sleep quality and duration
- Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression



### Benefits for social wellbeing

- Improved communication and relationships
- Promotes collaboration
- Helps to develop a sense of belonging
- Helps to build resilience and leadership qualities



### Consider this

By helping young people understand the positive benefits of participating in physical activity, you can ensure they have positive sporting experiences, and are supported to be physically active for life.

# The menstrual cycle

## The menstrual cycle

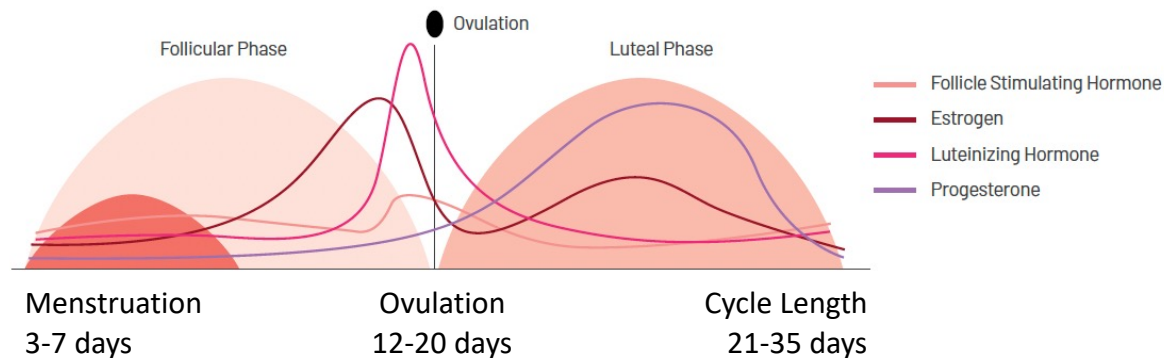
# Understanding the menstrual cycle

Report card

Are symptoms normal?

Balance check

Check-ins



### Key Terms

#### Menstruation (The Period):

The average period (days bleeding) lasts 3-7 days.

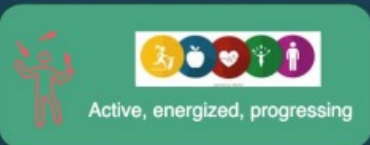
#### Ovulation:

Ovulation is the main event of the menstrual cycle, as it produces the female sex hormones (around day 12-14).

#### Hormones:

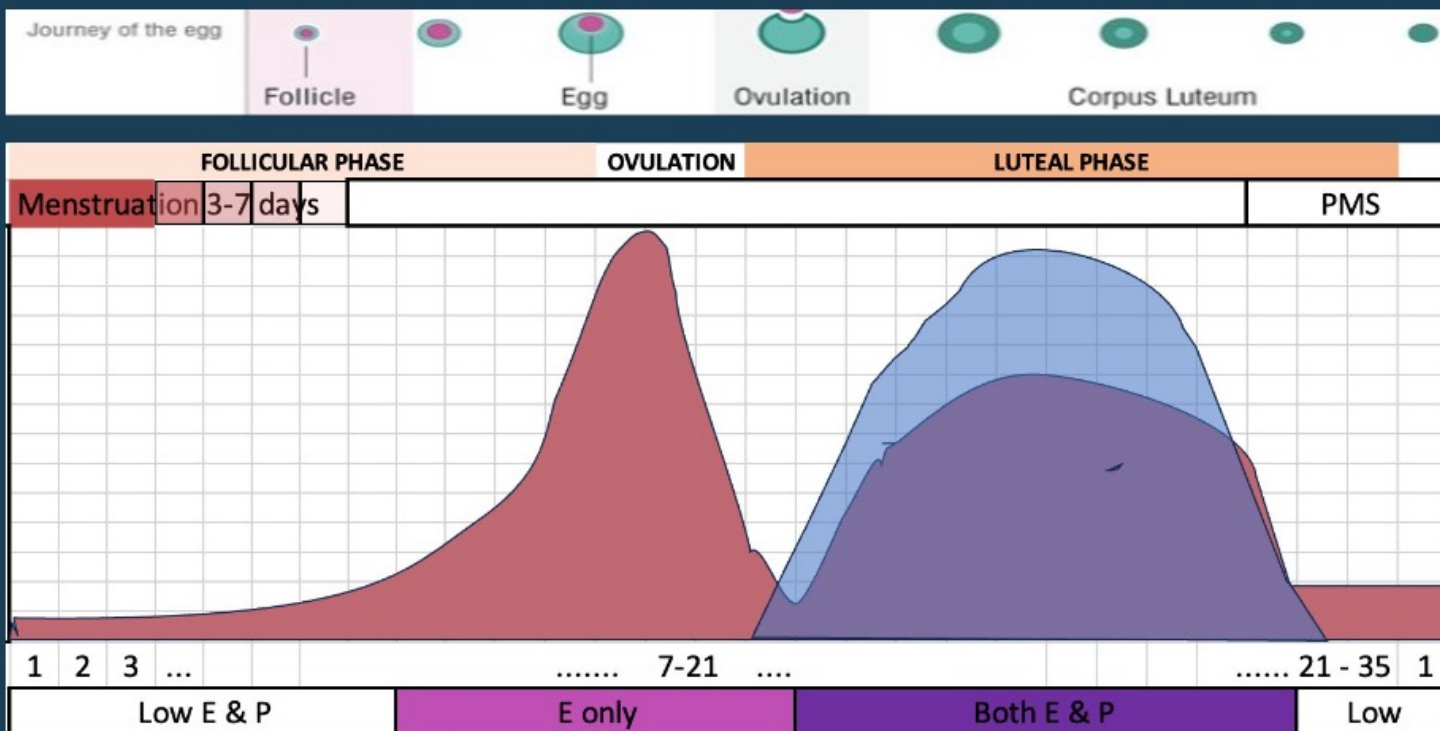
The two key hormones made are Oestrogen (Estradiol) and Progesterone. They support and influence many body systems and are vital for female health.

**EPIC: Estrogen and Progesterone in Cycle are the key menstrual cycle players in adult female health**



# My Menstrual Cycle

Your menstrual cycle and its hormones have a big positive role on your health! It is a critical monthly report card.



**EPIC!** - Estrogen and progesterone in Cycle are essential

They influence many body systems including:

- Brain development, cognition and mood
- Digestion, hydration and metabolism
- Growth, development and repair of bone, muscle, ligaments and tendons

They affect how you grow, how you recover and how you stay healthy



Many types of hormonal contraception can affect the menstrual cycle often

Encourage young athletes to track their cycles and discover what's important for them



## The menstrual cycle

# What is a healthy menstrual cycle?



Age

### Healthy

First period **8-16** years



Length of period

**3-7** days



Length of cycle

**21-35** days



Blood Loss

Change pads/tampons  $\leq$  **3-4** hourly



Pain

Any abdominal or pelvic pain should not affect everyday life – **ovulation/period/other**



Pre-menstrual symptoms (PMS)

Falling estrogen and progesterone can cause lower back pain, abdominal cramps, bloating, fatigue, mood changes and food cravings

### When to see a Doctor



Delayed onset of the first period. A GP consultation is recommended if there no sign of the first period at 15 years of age.

Bleeding that lasts longer than 7 days.

Frequent or unexplained spotting

Irregular (longer than 35 days), frequent (shorter than 21 days) or absent periods.

Heavy bleeding, leaking and large clots requiring very regular changes to period products. This can lead to low iron stores or may be a sign of underlying issues.

Symptoms which are not managed with over-the-counter medication and / or interfere with daily life.

Symptoms (such as major mood changes, fatigue, excess pain) which interfere with daily life should be assessed.

**Menstrual cycle symptoms should NOT affect everyday life – if in doubt seek professional advice**





## The menstrual cycle

# Exercising during the period

**Physical activity during the period is safe and the body can perform well.**

Female physiology is amazing. The female hormones oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone support physical activity and health.

During the period, muscles recover well from physical activity. There may be an experience of increased strength, speed and power.

Exercise and movement can help ease the mental and physical symptoms experienced in and around the period, such as low mood, abdominal cramps and low back pain.

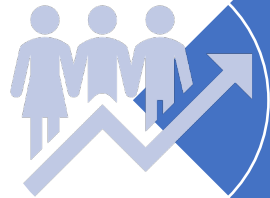
In the days before the period, mood changes may occur due to falling hormone levels (progesterone). Once the period begins and hormones are more even, there may be a time of calm and better moods.

**If in doubt  
CHECK IT OUT!**

**Remember:  
Endometriosis and Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome affect 20-30% of all females!**

## The menstrual cycle

# Changes to the menstrual cycle



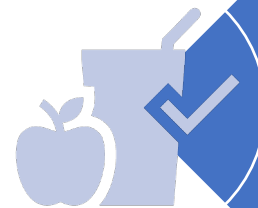
Age



Stress: Imbalanced  
load & recovery



Hormonal  
contraception



Under fuelling  
Under recovery



Pregnancy



Long distance travel  
Sleep disorders  
Shift work  
Medications or Medical

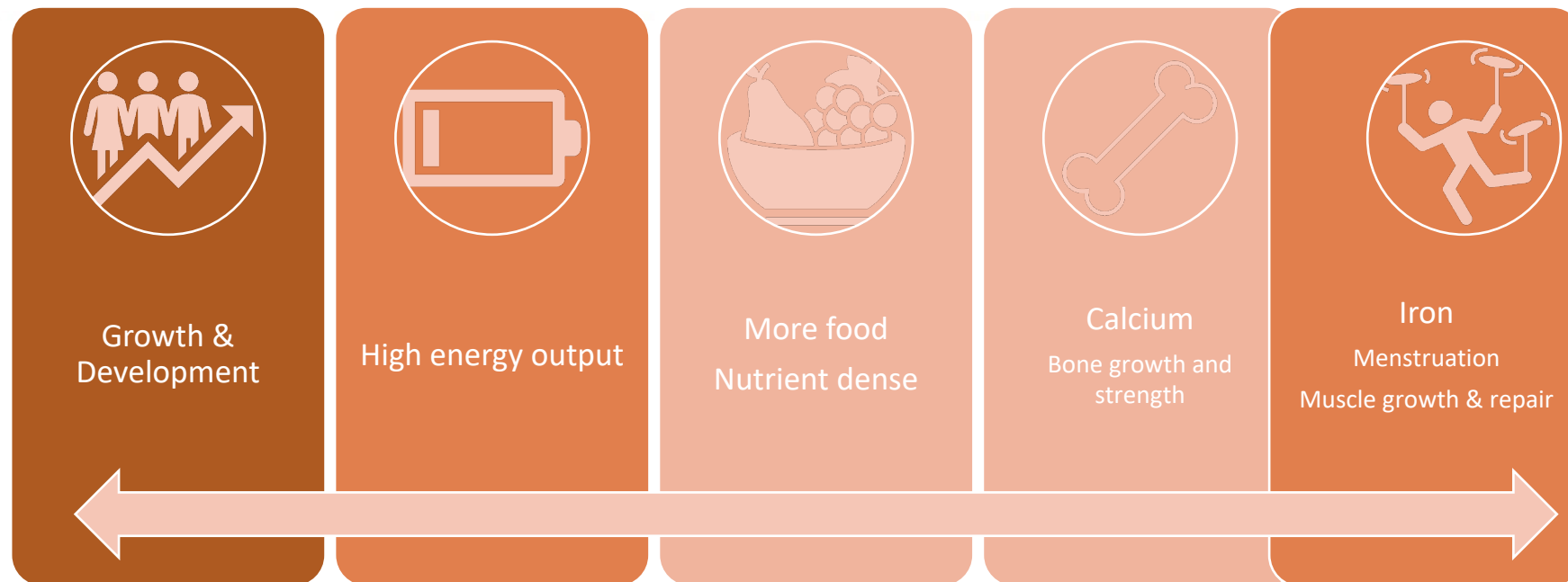


### Did you know?

Not having a period is not normal, even with hard exercise. Absence of the menstrual cycle can impact on bone health and injury risk due to the altered production of many important health hormones.

## Maintaining energy in sport

Every **BODY** needs **ENERGY** (nutrition & recovery) to support **HEALTH**  
**YOUNG BODIES NEED MORE!**



### Consider this

Encourage young people to get 8+ hours sleep per night to reduce the risk of illness and injury and aid recovery. Sleep also plays a major part in mental wellbeing. Monitor the number of early morning (or late) sessions or activities which impact sleep duration.

## Supporting balanced health

# How to assess balanced health

As coaches, instructors, or parents you can ask these questions to assess overall balance and better understand a young person's health and wellbeing.

### Training



- Are they enjoying participating in their sport or physical activity?
- Are they motivated to attend and / or compete?
- Is their activity balanced and are all elements covered? i.e., strength, core, fitness, fun.

### Nutrition



- How are they eating to support their physical activity?
- Do they avoid meals or specific food groups?
- Do they have energy throughout training and games?
- Can they recover between activities?

### Menstrual Cycle



- Are they experiencing regular menstrual cycles?
- Are they taking a hormonal contraception which may mask issues of the menstrual cycle?

### Sleep



- Are they getting 8+ hours of sleep per night?
- Do they feel fatigued or not recovered?
- Do they have at least one rest day per week?

### Support



- Do they have a good support network?
- Do they have a trusted adult who they can talk to if needed?

### Social Connection



- Are they connecting with friends and social groups?
- Are they feeling any pressures around participating in sport or other physical activities e.g., body image, playing with friends, loss of fun?

### Injury / Illness



- Have they been regularly injured or unwell?
- Is there a history of bone injury e.g., shin splints, stress reaction or stress fracture?
- Do they have a prolonged injury affecting participation and / or wellbeing?

### Other Interests



- Are they engaging in social activities and down time away from sport or physical activity?
- Do they come back motivated and engaged?

# Questions?



## Resources

Sport NZ Website – Balanced Female Health

<https://sportnz.org.nz/balanced-female-health/>



## Your feedback counts:

Let us know about your needs and the gaps in current information.

We are developing **NEW RESOURCES** **ATHLETE** and **PERFORMANCE SPORT** focus.

Suggestions and feedback to:  
[HealthyWomen@hpsnz.org.nz](mailto:HealthyWomen@hpsnz.org.nz)