



Menstrual Cycle & Performance

Menstrual cycle phase based training and nutrition is not supported by research evidence.

There is no credible research evidence to support tailoring your training or diet to the phases of the menstrual cycle.

Despite its popularity in the media, especially social media, using menstrual cycle phase based training or nutrition is likely to hinder rather than enhance your development and performance. Your training and nutrition needs are better determined by your sport rather than your cycle.

Adjustments can be made to your training or diet in response to your experiences of the menstrual cycle if needed. For example, if you have adverse changes in your physical or emotional well-being, which limit your ability to train or fuel, your programme should be adapted to take this adversity into account.

However it is probably better to talk to your support team about making effective and appropriate interventions that minimise any physical or emotional changes. This should mean that you can fuel, train, and compete as desired and to the best of your ability on all days of the menstrual cycle.

For example, if you experience gastrointestinal distress (such as diarrhoea) during your period, you can make subtle changes in your diet to prevent this effect. Or if you experience anxiety in a particular phase, you can employ some psychological techniques to prevent this effect from happening or limit its effect in real-time.

There is no 'high-risk' injury phase of the menstrual cycle

Most injuries are due to a range of different things and the precise causes are difficult to identify, unless it is a collision/impact injury.

Relating injuries to menstrual cycle phase is an oversimplification for which there is almost no trustworthy research evidence. You are no more or less likely to get injured in one specific phase of the menstrual cycle.

Social media can be an echo chamber where you encounter opinions that agree with your own, but this does not mean that they are true. In science we say that “correlation does not mean causation”; this means that even though some female athletes have sustained an injury in the same menstrual cycle phase as other female athletes this does not necessarily mean that the menstrual cycle phase caused it.

When it comes to injury risk, you have no need to fear one phase of the menstrual cycle more than any other.

Competitions have been won on all days/across all phases of the menstrual cycle.

Your menstrual cycle does not solely dictate how you train, compete, or fuel or determine if and when you get injured. There is not enough credible data at present to support these views.

Medals have been won, and records set, across the entire menstrual cycle. With adequate knowledge of your own menstrual cycle and effective support and mitigation, there is no reason why you cannot train, compete, and fuel as desired. We must remember that not all sportswomen are affected by their menstrual cycle and that some sportswomen experience positive effects during their cycle.

Thankfully, menstrual cycles are no longer a taboo topic in sport; however, their potential impact should not be overstated. Instead, menstrual cycles, and other ovarian hormone profiles, should be embedded within the sporting environment using a pragmatic evidence-based approach.