



Female Athlete Education.

THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE : HOW TO TRACK



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The benefits of menstrual cycle tracking:

As an athlete, tracking your menstrual cycle can benefit both your health as well as your sport participation and performance. In particular it can help you:

- Understand your own individual menstrual cycle patterns like cycle length and blood flow
- Identify any changes in your typical patterns and seek support for this (if needed)
- Be prepared by predicting your next period date(s)
- Manage menstrual cycle related symptoms
- Tracking alongside performance, training and recovery metrics could help you identify performance related trends across the menstrual cycle (if any)

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How to track your menstrual cycle:

- Using a phone app designed for menstrual cycle tracking
- Using a calendar
- Using pen and paper

No matter which method you choose, consistency is key! Start by tracking your cycles for at least **three consecutive months** to establish your patterns and what's typical for you.

When using cycle tracking apps, ensure that your **personal data is secure** by reviewing the apps' policy to understand how your data will be collected, stored, and shared.

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What to track across your menstrual cycle:



Cycle length:

The number of days from the start of one period to the day before the next period. To track this, **log the first day of your period** (first day of bleeding) - this marks day 1. *A typical cycle length is between 21 and 35 days (or up to 45 days in girls who got their first-ever period in the last 3-5 years).*



Period length and blood flow:

The number of days when you are bleeding and how much you bleed, such as light, moderate, heavy etc. You can also note any spotting/bleeding between periods. To track this, **log all the days when you are bleeding**. *A typical period length is between 3 and 7 days.*



Ovulation:

Keeping a track of signs of ovulation, such as changes in **cervical fluid, basal body temperature and ovulation predictor kit results** can help you spot if and when ovulation might be occurring (allowing you to get a better estimation of your cycle phases). *For more details on cycle phases, refer to 'The Menstrual Cycle: Back to Basics'*



Menstrual cycle related symptoms:

Log any **physical and mood symptoms (and their severity)** even if you aren't sure if they are linked to your cycle. Over time, you may be able to identify patterns and trends across multiple cycles. *Some common symptoms: abdominal cramps, fatigue, lower back pain, mood changes*



Performance related factors:

You can **map your performance data** (e.g., wellness, performance results, training data, and recovery metrics) **onto your cycle data**. Over time, you may be able to identify patterns and trends across multiple cycles.

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Takeaway message:



As an athlete you might want to start to track your menstrual cycle to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of your body
- Recognise any menstrual irregularities and dysfunctions (and seek medical help if needed)
- Anticipate and manage any menstrual cycle related symptoms
- Understand if/how your menstrual cycle influences your sport performance and what strategies can help you overcome any negatives or make the most of any positives!

All of this will allow you to keep performing at your best at any day of your cycle!

