

# PREGNANCY GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORTS: SUPPORTING AN ATHLETE POST-CHILDBIRTH

This guidance is designed to support athletes who wish to have a child while they are a member of a High-Performance Programme. It also advises Sports Governing Bodies (SGB) how to support an athlete's pregnancy appropriately at all stages.

## CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT



The SGB should **acknowledge and celebrate the arrival of the baby** by sending congratulations.



Following the six-week postnatal check, the athlete should provide their **NHS Discharge Summary** to the Female Athlete Health team at their respective Home Country Sports Institute (HSCI).



The SGB should continue to engage with the athlete, on the athlete's terms, to ensure they **still feel included within the programme**.

It is anticipated that the athlete will engage with the SGB within three months post-childbirth and have regular 'check-ins'.



## PREPARATIONS FOR RETURN



Once an athlete has been **'signed off' to return to training and competition safely**, it is appropriate for the athlete and SGB to monitor and assess:

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- ✓ the athlete's health and wellbeing, and appropriate levels of training/return to fitness
  - ✓ the athlete's intent to return to the sport and programme. This intent should be discussed and confirmed no later than six months post-childbirth
  - ✓ whether the athlete is engaging in any training and, if so, their commitment and/or progress against the agreed IADP
  - ✓ the athlete's training/life balance as an athlete and as a mother
  - ✓ The role of an athlete's partner if applicable



An athlete's **nutritional wellbeing** can have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of them and their baby, particularly if they are breastfeeding. Dietary requirements should be discussed with the HCSI nutritionist.



If the athlete had a **C-section delivery**, highlight to CMO and medical team for training and competition support plan.

## TRAINING AND COMPETITION

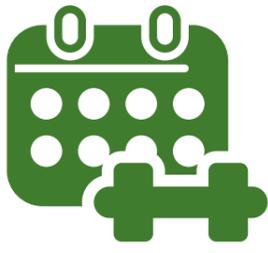
It is important that an athlete **acknowledges and respects what their body has been through** during pregnancy and birth before returning to training and competition.

Before **resuming training and activating an updated IADP**, it is recommended that the athlete has:

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- ✓ been discharged by the NHS post-natal maternity team
  - ✓ told the SGB about any complications during childbirth
  - ✓ confirmed if they have been referred to any specialists



An **athlete's return should be highlighted** to the SGB's Senior Leadership Team and associated athlete meetings for awareness.



For **effective rehabilitation post-childbirth**, both a strength and conditioning programme and an adapted IADP to suit the athlete's needs should be discussed and implemented.

Adopt a multi-disciplinary approach with the return to training programme.

Prior to returning to training and competition, your athlete may wish to speak with the SGB about **extra support they may need**, such as:

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- ✓ appropriateness and implications of bringing their baby to training and/or competitions
  - ✓ breastfeeding and a breastfeeding-friendly environment
  - ✓ training schedule being adapted to suit their baby's feeding
  - ✓ initial routine for their baby (including sleep and feeding time)

An athlete may wish to **conceive more than once during a funding cycle**. If they fall pregnant for a second time, they should have a conversation with a member of their medical team and Performance Director as soon as possible.

