

Reframing Return-to-Sport Postpartum: the 6 Rs Framework

Donnelly GM, Moore IS, Brockwell E, Rankin A, Cooke R. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2021

This framework is underpinned by a whole-systems, biopsychosocial approach that requires the safety of the mother and baby to be the overarching consideration.



Ready

Ready the athlete for anticipated whole-systems, biopsychosocial changes by proactively educating them about perinatal health considerations during the transition into pregnancy and motherhood (e.g., weight-gain, pelvic floor function, perinatal mental health). Aim to maintain exercise throughout pregnancy (where it is safe to do so for the mother and baby), limit deconditioning and optimise postpartum recovery with forward planning.

Review

Review and evaluate the postpartum athlete and address acute musculoskeletal and pelvic health rehabilitation needs. Screen for whole-systems, biopsychosocial considerations.*

Restore

Restore physical and psychological wellbeing depending on individual needs and prepare the perinatal athlete for returning to structured training environments. Include pelvic floor rehabilitation and other relevant whole-systems considerations.

Recondition

Recondition the perinatal athlete for their required physical and psychological sporting demands. Commence graded exposure towards individual-specific training load requirements. Revisit whole-systems, biopsychosocial considerations and monitor symptoms as training increases.

Return

Return-to-sport through an individualised, evidence-informed and guided exposure to the competitive environment and re-evaluate regularly.

Refine

Refine whole-systems, biopsychosocial strategies (e.g., optimise sleep quality, monitor for signs of relative energy deficiency syndrome) to enhance athlete training and competition availability, retaining the athlete in their sport and optimising performance.

*Whole-systems, biopsychosocial considerations - childbirth related trauma (e.g., abdominal wall dysfunction, pelvic floor dysfunction or post-traumatic stress); menstrual health; breast health (e.g., review breast support particularly in the breastfeeding athlete); energy balance (e.g., relative energy deficiency in sport); psychological wellbeing (e.g., perinatal mental health); fear of movement; and sleep (e.g., sleep routine and quality).