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Understanding the Relationship between Performance and the Menstrual Cycle

Group Task ²⁵

1: What is your experience in working with female players?

2: Outline your knowledge of the female menstrual cycle

3: In your opinion, what impact, if any, does the female menstrual cycle have on performance

4: As a coach, what considerations, if any, should be made to cater for female players?



Menstrual Cycle

50-90% say it affects their training & performance

81% of athletes have never discussed their menstrual cycle with their coach.



40% of 14 –16-year-olds say that their periods stop them from taking part in sport altogether.

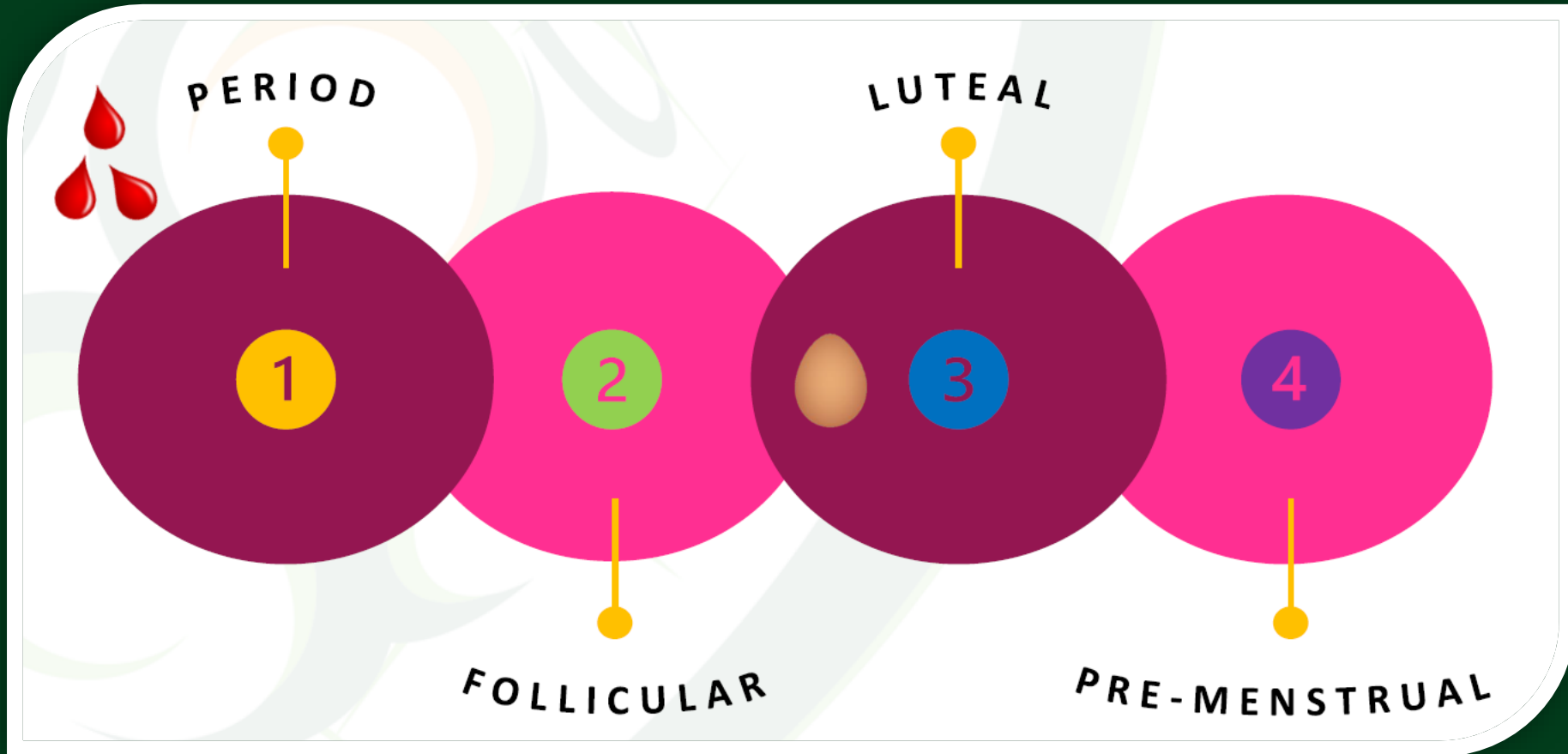
82% of athletes have never received any information about their menstrual cycle in sport and exercise.



WORLD NEWS

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Phases of the Menstrual Cycle



What does this mean for Performance and Training?

Period

Symptoms

Increased pain and other menstrual cycle symptoms

Increased inflammation, decreased recovery & risk of illness

Considerations / Recommendations

Managing periods,
kit bag
considerations

Moving on your
period is
encouraged & can
help lift moods

Yoga is
encouraged to
help with muscle
flexibility

No right or wrong
way to exercise
during this time

Adapt to your own
individual needs.
Listen to your own
body

Restore Iron levels
through Iron rich
foods

What does this mean for Performance and Training?

Follicular



Symptoms


Increase levels of oestrogen associated with improved mood, motivation and energy

Strength training peak
Improved adaptation and better recovery

More benefits from high intensity training.
Repair of muscle tissues is better

Increased laxity and risk of ACL injuries

High oestrogen levels are linked with increasing joint laxity



Considerations / Recommendations

Complete a more progressive and thorough warm up

Adapt preparation around this phase to lower the risk of injury

Increase intake of carbohydrates before training during this phase

What does this mean for Performance and Training?

Luteal




Symptoms

Calming hormone reduces anxiety

Reduced coordination, decreased skill

Players are more inclined to be clumsy etc

Increased body temperature. Feel hotter and perceive exercise as harder than it is



Considerations / Recommendations

Use fats for energy throughout this phase

Might be able to exercise for longer but at a lower intensity

Recovery takes longer

Junk food cravings can happen in 3 & 4 causing weight fluctuations

What does this mean for Performance and Training?

Pre-Menstrual

Symptoms

Increased premenstrual symptoms

Reduced motivation and willingness to train

Recovery from training might take longer

Disturbed sleep

Decreased alertness and concentration

Increased stress levels

Increased appetite

Considerations / Recommendations

Yoga, Pilates encouraged

Nutrition tip: Foods rich in vitamin D, calcium, fish oils and B vitamins

Important here for individuals to listen to their body

Encouraged to move

Menstrual cycle talk 'breaking barriers'

How do we Optimise Performance?

Point of Contact

Have an identified individual within your team with whom athletes are comfortable in approaching such as FLO, Doctor, Physio

Menstrual Cycle Profiles

All players should complete a thorough menstrual cycle history profile with inclusion of relevant medical details such as: Hormonal Contraceptives, Iron Levels, Menstrual Malfunctions and perceived impact on training/performance

Regular Monitoring

Daily monitoring of cycle phases and symptoms. Eg: FITR Woman, Metrifit

Education

Develop awareness, openness, knowledge and understanding of the menstrual cycle

Educational workshops for athletes, coaches, support staff and parents

Main Takeaways



- Change awareness and have it considered in everything we do
- Educate players and coaches around the topic and training loads
- Educate players, coaches, managers, parents, partners and friends on the topic. Get them talking about periods and how they impact our sport
- Provide sanitary products at training and match venues
- Avoid light coloured shorts where possible



- Every individual's menstrual cycle is different
- Tailor nutrition around cycle
- Track your cycle
- Ask questions like did I train well or not? How do I perform during each phase?
- Work with the Menstrual Cycle not against it
- Share your cycle: get comfortable sharing your cycle data with coaches, parents, a physio or anyone who supports you.

ANY QUESTION?