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Pregnancy Guidance

**1 Introduction**

1.1 Women are increasingly seeking to continue participation in sports, throughout their pregnancy. There are many positive outcomes from continuing physical activity during and after pregnancy whether playing, umpiring or coaching.   
  
1.2 Up until 12-14 weeks gestation, the uterus is protected by the bony pelvis. Beyond this date, the uterus expands beyond the pelvis into the abdomen and is exposed to blunt trauma. An increase in body weight, a shift of the centre of gravity, and increase in the relaxin hormone and progesterone hormones in pregnancy can lead to joint instability and a possible increased risk of injury.

1.3 There is a small, but significant risk of harm to the foetus (and the mother) from either a fall or being struck by a blunt force.

**2 Guidance on Playing, Umpiring and Coaching**

2.1 England Hockey therefore advise that players, umpires and coaches should consult with their GP as soon as pregnancy is confirmed to ensure they are fit to continue playing, up to 12 weeks.

2.2 However, playing hockey when pregnant beyond 12 weeks may cause harm to the foetus due to the increased risk of blunt trauma from contact with another player, ball or stick. England Hockey do not recommend that players, umpires or coaches participate in hockey beyond 12 weeks of pregnancy.  
  
2.3 England Hockey appreciate that each individual and pregnancy is different, therefore, if you are considering continuing playing, umpiring or coaching beyond 12 weeks, please consider the guidance below.

**3 Continuing Playing, Umpiring and Coaching**

3.1 Consult with an appropriately qualified medical practitioner to inform, on a voluntary basis, of their pregnancy and to obtain individual and specific professional medical confirmation to continue participating in further hockey activity.

3.2 Continuously review with an appropriately qualified medical practitioner when considering the continuation of hockey participation.

3.3 Speak with your club, association or appointing body to complete a risk assessment, focussing on mitigating the risks of participating while pregnant.

3.4 Consider the risks to yourself and others which may come from playing, umpiring or coaching.

3.5 If you are an elite athlete on the World Class Programme (WCP), please speak with your National Governing Body and utilise the [UK Sport guidance](https://www.uksport.gov.uk/-/media/files/resources/uk-sport-pregnancy-guidance-athletes---december-2023.ashx).

**4 Returning to Hockey**

4.1 Returning to sport following childbirth is a highly individual process that should prioritise the health, recovery, and well-being of the individual. England Hockey recommends a gradual and phased return to physical activity to support safe and effective recovery.

4.2 It is advisable for individuals to wait at least 6 weeks following vaginal delivery and 12 weeks following a caesarean delivery before resuming moderate or high-impact activities. This timeframe may vary depending on the individual's recovery and health status.

4.3 Before returning to any form of sport or structured training, individuals are strongly encouraged to:

4.3.1 Consult a qualified medical practitioner;

4.3.2 Prioritise pelvic floor and core rehabilitation exercises;

4.3.3 Listen to their body, gradually increasing activity levels.

4.4 Please utilise [NHS guidance](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/support-and-services/keeping-fit-and-healthy-with-a-baby/) when returning to sport

**5 Terms**

Neither England Hockey, nor the club, association or appointing body will be held liable for any pregnant individuals participating in recognised activity should the expectant mother suffer a miscarriage, significant or permanent damage to herself and/or unborn child.

*Note: The information contained within this document is for guidance purposes only. While England Hockey makes every effort to ensure that the information provided is accurate and up to date, it should not be a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, England Hockey do not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this guidance, or information on websites included or referred to in it.*

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