
TOWARDS IMPROVING THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF WOMEN IN SPORT

Call to action and mental health and wellbeing resources

This resource accompanies the listed recommendations in the report ‘Towards improving the safety and wellbeing of women in sport’. Below are a number of actions you can take and resources you can access. These resources have been categorised according to the thematic areas of psychosocial stress identified by the findings of Victoria University’s (VU) survey and interviews with women athletes, as well as VU’s synthesis of published research¹. These thematic areas include concerns over pregnancy and parenting, financial security, mental health, body shape and weight, and responding to violence.

Information for women athletes’ health and family planning concerns are listed below and include guidance and support for: family planning, managing pregnancy and preparing for childbirth, returning to sport after child birth, and general health concerns (pelvic, breast and bone health).

- ◆ Initiative to raise awareness and understanding of female athlete performance and health
 - [Female Performance and Health Initiative \(AIS\)](#)
- ◆ Resources on nutrition, pregnancy, bone health, and exercise for women across the lifespan
 - [Sports Medicine Australia Active Women in Sport](#)
- ◆ Guidelines on hormone health and a focus on relative energy deficiency in sport (RED-S)
 - [Female Athlete Hormone Health 2022 NICE Guidelines Update](#)
- ◆ Resources for both athletes and other sport stakeholders on supporting athlete performance during and after pregnancy
 - [AIS High Performance Pregnancy Guidelines](#)

Women athletes are likely to be experiencing psychological distress, as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety.

- ◆ Coaches and support staff (including exercise physiologists, physiotherapists) are in a position where they may notice changes in an athlete’s mental health and wellbeing.
 - [The role of Accredited Exercise Physiologists within the treatment of mental distress](#)
- ◆ ESSA often runs accredited courses that meet key Continuing Professional Development criteria and many of these are relevant to mental wellbeing. Search for these courses here
 - [ESSA External professional development](#)
- ◆ Information on available mental health care through Medicare and associated costs
 - [Mental Health Care and Medicare](#)
- ◆ Here you can find registered allied health practitioners by location (e.g., psychologists, social workers)
 - [Registered Health Practitioners \(AHPRA\)](#)
- ◆ Here you can find an athlete resource for mental health support
 - [Mental Health Referral Network](#)
- ◆ Here is a guide for coaches and athletes about mental health in sport
 - [Mental health for coaches and athletes](#)

Women athletes are likely to experience concerns about their body shape and weight.

- ◆ Here you can find considerations for best practice for managing body composition assessment and disordered eating within high performance sport
 - [AIS Guidelines on Body Composition Assessment](#)
- ◆ Here you can find key information on how to recognise and support athletes with eating disorders
 - [AIS and National Eating Disorders Collaboration position statement on disordered eating in high performance sport](#)

Women athletes are likely to experience distress or concern over financial wellbeing.

- ◆ Here you can find financial advice and services provided by the Australian Government
 - [Money Smart Financial Advice](#)
 - [Australian Government Financial Information Service](#)

Women athletes report significant levels of exposure to psychological, physical and sexual violence from peers, coaches and parents, and exposure to cyber abuse.

- ◆ You can find key frameworks and tools and resources to help you build knowledge and skills in the prevention of violence against women here
 - [Our Watch – Prevention in Action](#)

Noting this, disclosures of gender-based violence in the workplace are rare, so other safeguarding policies and practices will be critical² and organisations should act to ensure safety and provide support.

Female Performance and Health Initiative (AIS): <https://www.ais.gov.au/fphi>

Sports Medicine Australia Active Women in Sport: <https://sma.org.au/resources-advice/policies-and-guidelines/active-women-in-sport/>

Female Athlete Hormone Health 2022 NICE Guidelines Update: <https://blogs.bmj.com/bjbm/2022/05/18/female-athlete-hormone-health-2022-nice-guideline-update/>

AIS High Performance Pregnancy Guidelines: <https://www.ais.gov.au/fphi/female-athlete-resources/resources/pregnancy>

The role of Accredited Exercise Physiologists within the treatment of mental distress: https://www.essa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Consensus-statement-on-the-role-of-Accredited-Exercise-Physiologists-within-the-treatment-of-mental-disorders-for-mental-health-professionals_v8.pdf

ESSA External professional development: <https://www.essa.org.au/External-Professional-Development>

Mental Health Care and Medicare: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/mental-health-care-and-medicare?context=60092>

Registered Health Practitioners (AHPRA): <https://www.ahpra.gov.au>

Mental Health Referral Network: <https://www.ais.gov.au/mhrn>

Mental health for coaches and athletes: <https://www.scienceforsport.com/mental-health-in-sport-a-guide-for-coaches-and-athletes/>

Urgent Actions

1. To make/report a complaint and support someone experiencing violence.

- ◆ If you need to make a complaint or report on abuse or conduct*
 - [Sport Integrity Australia](#)
- ◆ If you need to find a support service for those who have experienced family-based violence and/or sexual violence
 - [National Support Services](#)
 - [Our Watch – Practice guidance Responding to Disclosures](#)

2. If you or one of your athletes is experiencing a mental health concern, you can find national mental resources, programs, support and services at the link below.

- [Head to Health](#)

* Sport Integrity Australia only action complaints for athletes within [sports who have signed up](#) to the National Integrity Framework (NIF) and the complaint must be referring to an event that occurred after the sport signed up to the NIF. If your sport has not signed up to the NIF you will need to report the concern directly through the individual sport organization.

References

1. Pascoe M, Pankowiak A, Woessner M, et al. Gender-specific psychosocial stressors influencing mental health among women elite and semi-elite athletes: a narrative review. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2022; 56:1381-1387.
2. media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/02/15002441/PG_Responding-to-disclosures_UpdatedFeb2019.pdf

AIS Guidelines on Body Composition Assessment: https://www.ais.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/954704/Disordered-eating-body-composition-considerations.pdf

AIS and National Eating Disorders Collaboration position statement on disordered eating in high performance sport: <https://bjbm.bmj.com/content/54/21/1247>

Money Smart Financial Advice: <https://moneysmart.gov.au/financial-advice> Australian Government Financial Information Service: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/financial-information-service>

Our Watch – Prevention in Action: <https://action.ourwatch.org.au/tools-and-resources/>

Sport Integrity Australia: <https://www.sportintegrity.gov.au>

National Support Services: <https://www.respect.gov.au/services/>

Our Watch – Practice guidance Responding to Disclosures: https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/02/15002441/PG_Responding-to-disclosures_UpdatedFeb2019.pdf

Head to Health: <https://www.headtohealth.gov.au>

sports who have signed up: <https://www.sportintegrity.gov.au/what-we-do/national-integrity-framework/sports-signed-national-integrity-framework>

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