

BACKGROUND ISSUES

1. Women are increasingly seeking to continue participation in sports, such as netball, throughout their pregnancy.
2. There are many positive outcomes from continuing physical activity during and after pregnancy, however as maternal and foetal responses to exercise can vary with pre-gestational maternal fitness levels, co-existing medical conditions and/ or pregnancy complications all women are encouraged to seek individual medical advice before participating
3. Further information on Pregnancy and Sport may be gained from Sports Medicine Australia's "SMA Statement – The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy" Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport 5 (1) : p11-19.
4. In Australia, Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation exists in relation to discrimination. This anti-discrimination legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate against a female on the basis of pregnancy, subject to specific exemptions.
5. There are a number of legal issues to be considered if there are pregnant players, these include; providing reasonably safe playing environments, privacy of the pregnant participant and responsibility of the pregnant player for inherent and obvious risks. Further information on these issues is available in the Australian Sports Commission's publication "Pregnancy, Sport and the Law".

PREGNANCY POLICY

Netball Australia is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment for all its members, including pregnant players. Netball Australia encourages all pregnant players to discuss their decision to continue playing during their pregnancy with their medical practitioner.

POLICY GUIDELINES

The following guidelines may assist clubs/ associations when a pregnant player is involved.

A PREGNANT PLAYER SHOULD:

- Be aware that her own health, and the well being of her unborn child, is of utmost importance in her decision about whether to continue playing sport
- Obtain expert medical advice as to the risks associated with playing sport when pregnant. She should ensure she understands this advice and where necessary question the advice until she is sure she understands the risks taken in participating in Netball
- Have regular antenatal reviews with her doctor, including ongoing review of her exercise participation
- Take into account her changed physical condition, use common sense and not take unnecessary risks
- Remember that the ultimate decision to participate in Netball will always be hers, whilst having regard to all the circumstances

A SPORTS ADMINISTRATOR SHOULD:

- Evaluate the precautions she/ he can take to avoid harm to all players, including pregnant players
- Develop protocols and procedures to communicate with players regarding participation in Netball during pregnancy, including:
 - providing players with the opportunity to advise of their pregnancy;
 - adding pregnancy advice and risk information to registration forms and prominent places where participants may view it(Note: legal advice about the form and wording of documents should be obtained)
- Be aware of Commonwealth, State and Territory anti-discrimination legislation and its application in Netball and review the rules, regulations and constitution of her/ his team/ club/ association/ member organisation with respect to the relevant anti-discrimination legislation
- Seek professional advice, (including medical and/ or legal,) if a situation arises where it is not clear what steps should be taken in a given circumstance
- Ensure that the organisation's insurance (including public liability and player injury insurance) is up to date and that it provides appropriate cover
- Promote adherence to the rules of the game

- Create a playing environment that is reasonably safe for all players

A COACH SHOULD:

- Be aware of the professional medical advice “SMA Statement - The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy” Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport 5 (1) : p11–19 in relation to exercise and pregnancy and the implications of participation in Netball during pregnancy
- Take reasonable measures to ensure that all athletes are aware of the issues related to participation in Netball during pregnancy
- Respect and support the player’s right to make her own decisions in relation to her participation or non participation in Netball whilst pregnant
- With the agreement of the player, advise the pertinent team/ club association/ member organisation officials that you are coaching a pregnant player

NOTE: *Coaches, trainers and others who give pregnant athletes advice on how to train during their pregnancy must be very careful that they are not placing themselves in the position of medical experts. They should not speak outside their scope of knowledge as they could face legal action for negligent advice. A consultative approach between athlete, coach and medical expert is recommended.*

THE MATCH OFFICIALS SHOULD:

- Apply the rules governing the sport equally and fairly to all participants

OTHER PLAYERS SHOULD:

- Respect and support a pregnant athlete in the same way as they would any other participant

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The Netball Australia Board of Directors approved this policy on 15th October 2004.

The Pregnancy Policy and Guidelines will be reviewed annually and against related legislative changes.

Sources:

Australian Rugby Union “Pregnancy Policy”
Australian Sports Commission “Pregnancy, Sport and the Law”
Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport 5 (1) : p11–19 “SMA Statement – The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy”
Surf Life Saving Australia “Policy Statement: Pregnancy and the Surf Lifesaver – Competition and Patrols”
South Australia Netball Association “Pregnancy Policy and Guidelines”