

Pregnancy in Sport Policy

Policy Name: Pregnancy in Sport Policy

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Last Reviewed: June 2023

Next Review: June 2026

Applicable Legislation: Sports Medicine Australia

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required by the organisation. The review will ensure it reflects both the community expectations and all legal requirements.



Overview

Volleyball Western Australia (VWA) aims to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all its members, including pregnant athletes. VWA encourages all pregnant athletes to discuss their decision to continue playing during their pregnancy with their medical practitioner. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that practices and procedures are in place that protect pregnant athletes from any situations that may cause harm to them or their foetus.

This policy is to be read in-conjunction with the following documents:

- VWA Anti-Harassment Policy
- VWA Complaint Management Policy
- Sports Medicine Australia's Pregnancy Statement and Pregnancy and Exercise Fact Sheet¹

Background

According to Sports Medicine Australia (SMA), "all women without contraindications should be encouraged to participate in aerobic and strength-conditioning exercises as part of a healthy lifestyle during their pregnancy. Reasonable goals of aerobic conditioning in pregnancy should be to maintain a good fitness level throughout pregnancy without trying to reach peak fitness...Women active before pregnancy can continue with their regular exercise / sport as long as associated risks and recommended modifications are considered"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. Modifications to programs may need to be considered.

SMA advises that women participating in activities that require rapid changes in direction should consult with their doctor before participating and that elite athletes who continue to train throughout pregnancy require supervision by an obstetric care provider who has "knowledge of the impact of strenuous exercise on maternal and foetal outcomes".³

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.

Policy Application

1. This policy applies to all VWA members and all other people or organisations which by agreement or otherwise, are bound to comply with this policy
2. This policy applies to behaviour and practices occurring during the course of VWA business, activities, competitions and events

¹ www.sma.org.au

² https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2017/08/SMA_AWiS_Pregnancy_-_Exercise.pdf

³ www.sma.org.au

Responsibilities

VWA'S role and contribution in making this policy work is to:

1. Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that everyone in the organisation knows:
 - a) What the policy is
 - b) Their roles and responsibilities
2. This will be achieved by:
 - a) Including a copy of the Policy in Policy and Procedures Manual
 - b) Distributing the Policy to all Associations and Clubs
 - c) Ensuring all VWA and Club / Association personnel are educated and trained with the policy
 - d) Including a copy of the policy on the VWA website
 - e) Notifying all members and participants in all VWA activities and / or events that they will be required to comply with this policy
 - f) Reviewing the policy and updating as required every 12 months

Clubs / Associations roles and member's contributions are to:

1. Comply with this policy and ensure information is made available
2. Ensure all significant personnel are familiar with the policy at each level of the VWA network
3. Collaborate with VWA employees to implement best practice
4. Report any areas of concern to VWA within a timely manner

Policy Statement

VWA will take all breaches of the policy seriously and will ensure they are dealt with promptly, sensitively and confidentially. Disciplinary action may be taken against a person who is found in breach of this policy, in accordance with the Complaints Management Procedure.

Pregnancy in Sport Procedure

Pregnant Athletes

Pregnant athletes are recommended to:

- Place their own health and the well-being of her unborn child as the utmost importance in their decision about whether to continue playing volleyball.
- Obtain expert medical advice as to the risks associated with playing volleyball when pregnant.
- Have regular antenatal reviews with their doctor, including ongoing review of her exercise participation.
- Take into account her changed physical condition, use common sense and not take unnecessary risks
- Understand that the ultimate decision to participate in volleyball will always be theirs, whilst having regard to all the circumstances.

Administrators

An Administrator should:

- Develop protocols and procedures to communicate with athletes regarding participation in volleyball during pregnancy, including:
 - providing athletes with the opportunity to advise of their pregnancy in the medical declaration; and
 - adding pregnancy advice and risk information to registration forms
- Be aware of Commonwealth, State and Territory anti-discrimination legislation and its application in volleyball and review the rules, regulations and constitution of their Club / Association / 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 athlete injury insurance) is up to date and that it provides appropriate cover.
- Apply the rules governing the sport equally and fairly to all participants.

Coaches

A Coach should:

- Create a playing environment that is reasonably safe for all athletes
- Be aware of the professional medical advice "SMA Statement - The Benefits and Risks of Exercise in Pregnancy"⁴, in relation to exercise and pregnancy and the implications of participation in volleyball during pregnancy.
- Take reasonable measures to ensure that all athletes are aware of the issues related to participation in volleyball during pregnancy.
- Respect and support the athlete's right to make their own decisions in relation to her participation or non-participation in volleyball whilst pregnant.

⁴ <https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2017/08/pregnancystatement.pdf>

- Seek a consultative approach with the athlete and medical expert. 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.

Other Athletes

Other Athletes should:

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