



University of Southern Indiana Policy on Pregnant Student Athletes

Introduction

With increasing numbers of women participating in sports, there are more women who become pregnant while playing intercollegiate sports. The purpose of this policy is to develop guidelines to protect the health, confidentiality, scholarship and ability of the pregnant student athlete to participate, while also assisting medical providers, coaches and administrators with uniform guidelines that address this issue. The University of Southern Indiana supports the continued academic success of all female students who become pregnant.

Medical Issues

Although there are few studies related to intense strenuous physical activity in pregnant student-athletes, there are published guidelines that address this issue. *The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology Committee Opinion January 2002* and the *NCAA Guideline 3b Participation by the Pregnant Student Athlete June 2002* offer guidelines for the obstetric and team physicians to use in determining participation. If participation is allowed, the student athlete will require close obstetric supervision. Prior to permitting the pregnant student athlete to participate in her intercollegiate sport, the University will form a support team for the student athlete. The team should consist of the *obstetrician, team physician, coach, athletic trainer, athletic department representative, and others, if necessary*. Medical issues related to participation should be discussed, and a plan for participation may be created. Participation by the pregnant student athlete will require approval from the obstetrician and the team physician. Following delivery or pregnancy termination, medical clearance is required to ensure the student athlete's safe return to athletics. See **References** for additional information for healthcare providers.

Legal and Administrative Issues

When a pregnant female athlete informs the athletic department of her pregnant status, the department should first advise the student regarding her options within the athletic department and how they relate to her future scholarship status and participation on the team.

The NCAA Division II Manual Rule 14.2.2.2 states:

Pregnancy Exception. A member institution may approve a two-semester or three-quarter extension of this 10-semester/15-quarter period of eligibility for a female student-athlete for reasons of pregnancy.

Pregnant student athletes should not voluntarily withdraw immediately. They should be counseled on the issues related to pregnancy, participation, eligibility extension and financial aid before making this decision.

The University of Southern Indiana complies with Title IX and does not discriminate on the basis of pregnancy. The Athletic Department will allow a leave of absence for pregnancy as long as medically necessary. Pregnancy is treated no differently than any other type of temporary medical condition. The obstetrician and team physician in conjunction with the student athlete determine the length of participation and any activity restrictions. The support team will monitor academic and athletic performance and assist the student athlete with return to competition after the pregnancy if the student athlete chooses.

Female athletes' right to privacy is the same for pregnancy as it is for any other personal medical information. The student athlete should be assured that her medical information will be kept confidential unless she gives permission to release the information. She will be encouraged to discuss her pregnancy with her coach, but the decision to inform a coach about the condition of pregnancy will remain at the discretion of the athlete. If coaches are informed, they should maintain the privacy of the information. Coaches and athletic trainers should not counsel the athlete on pregnancy issues, such as abortion, adoption or parenting. Instead, they should refer the patient to the USI Student Health Center or to the student athlete's private physician.

A male student athlete dealing with a partner's pregnancy will also be referred to counseling and health care providers at the Student Health Center. A support team may be formed to help the male student athlete with pregnancy and related issues of participation and academic progress.

Informed Consent

As recommended by *NCAA Guideline 3b Participation by the Pregnant Student-Athlete*, documentation outlining the student athlete's medical condition, potential risks of athletic participation during pregnancy, and the student athlete's understanding of these risks should be included in the medical record in the form of a signed informed consent.

Insurance

The Athletic Department insurance does not cover pregnancy-related care. If the student athlete has the University-sponsored health insurance, this policy does cover pregnancy. The student athlete should contact the Student Health Center for more information at 812/464-8600. If the student athlete has her own health insurance, she can be followed by a healthcare provider on that insurance plan. If she has no insurance, the student athlete will be referred a local health care provider.

USI Student Athlete Handbook: Student Athlete Pregnancy

Student Athletes and Pregnancy

If you become pregnant: If you become pregnant while participating on an intercollegiate team at the University of Southern Indiana, we want you to know we have a policy designed to help you. The University of Southern Indiana supports the continued academic success of all female students who become pregnant. We encourage you to discuss your pregnancy and related health concerns with your private physician or a physician at the Student Health Center. We also encourage you to tell your athletic trainer and coach as soon as you learn you are pregnant, but you are not required to do so. You may also want to inform your partner, family members, religious advisor, personal physician and others close to you. If you have seen a healthcare provider for diagnosis of pregnancy, you should be aware that you are protected by confidentiality, and they cannot inform anyone else of your pregnancy without your permission. If athletic trainers and coaches are informed, they will also keep this information confidential unless you give them permission to do otherwise. Pregnancy in a student athlete can be a challenging event, and we want to protect your physical and mental health as well as the health of the fetus while you consider your options. We suggest you do not withdraw from your sport before talking to someone, as this can result in loss of scholarship.

NCAA Bylaw 15.3.4.1 states:

“Institutional financial aid based in any degree on athletics ability may be reduced or canceled during the period of the award, if the recipient: ... voluntarily withdraws from a sport at any time for personal reasons.”

Pregnancy is considered a temporary medical condition, and the **NCAA Division I Manual Rule 14.2.1.3** is as follows:

Pregnancy Exception. A member institution may approve a two-semester or three-quarter extension of this 10-semester/15-quarter period of eligibility for a female student-athlete for reasons of pregnancy.

What happens to your scholarship? If you are pregnant and you inform your athletic trainer and coach and you do not voluntarily withdraw from your sport, your scholarship will remain in place for the remainder of the granting year, July 1-June 30. Your coach can help you discuss your situation with the Athletic Department.

Where to go for help: Your athletic trainer or coach will refer you to counseling and healthcare providers outside the Athletic Department at the USI Student Health Center. Remember, your athletic trainers and coaches are obligated to keep your pregnancy confidential unless you specifically give them permission to share that information. If you choose not to tell your athletic trainer or coach, refer to the list of resources on the next page. You can be seen for pregnancy testing, referral and counseling at the USI Student Health Center. Healthcare providers there can also help you discuss your pregnancy with your athletic trainer and coach with your consent.

USI Student Health Center Health Professions Building - HP091	812/465-1250
USI Counseling Center Orr Center - OC1051	812/464-1867
ECHO Division Street Pediatric & Prenatal Clinic 25 W. Division Street Evansville, IN 47710	812/436-4501
Pregnancy Resource Center - http://www.evansvilleprc.com/ 5525 Pearl Dr. Suite C Evansville, IN 47712	812/475-9549
Pregnancy Resource Center - http://www.evansvilleprc.com/ 125 N. Weinbach Ave. Suite #210 Evansville, IN 47714	812/491-1542
Planned Parenthood 125 Weinbach Ave. Suite 120 Evansville, IN 47711	812/473-4990
USI Children's Learning Center (Daycare)	812/464-1869

Can you participate in your sport? If you are pregnant and want to continue to participate in your sport, then you, your healthcare provider, the team physician, your coach, your athletic trainer, and the athletic department representative will form a support team to discuss if and how you can safely continue in your sport. Depending on your sport and with your healthcare provider's approval, you may be able to participate up to the 14th week of your pregnancy. If you choose to participate, you will receive information regarding the risks of athletic participation during pregnancy and your healthcare provider will discuss it with you. When you feel that you understand the issues involved in participating during pregnancy, you will be asked to sign a consent, and it will be added to your medical record. Your support team will monitor your health and academic progress during your pregnancy and can assist you in return to your sport if you decide to return.

What about medical insurance coverage? If you have the USI-sponsored health insurance and become pregnant, this insurance will cover your pregnancy. Contact the insurance coordinator at the Student Health Center at **812/465-1250** for more information. If you are not insured, contact the ECHO Division Street Pediatric & Prenatal Clinic at 812/436-4501 for an appointment for prenatal care. The Athletic Department does not pay for pregnancy-related costs.

What if you are a male athlete whose partner becomes pregnant? While male student athletes are not affected physically by pregnancy like female student athletes, they can have stress over the pregnancy and worry about their pregnant partner and her fetus. Male student athletes may question whether they are ready for fatherhood and the personal and financial obligations associated with pregnancy. We encourage you to discuss these issues with your partner and healthcare providers at the USI Student Health Center or USI Counseling Center.

References

1. ACOG Committee Opinion No. 267, **Exercise During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period**, Vol. 99, No. 1, January 2002, 171-173.
2. American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) offers guidance on **Physical Activity During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period**, American College of Sports Medicine: <http://www.acsm.org>
3. NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook **Guideline 3b**:
http://www.ncaa.org/library/sports_sciences/sports_med_handbook/2006-07/2006-07_sports_medicine_handbook.pdf
4. Clapp, JF, Exercise **During Pregnancy A Clinical Update**, Clinics in Sports Medicine, 2000 Apr;19(2): 273-86
5. Paisley, TS, Joy, EA, Price, RJ, **Exercise During Pregnancy: A Practical Approach**, Current Sports Medicine Reports, 2003, 2:325-330
6. Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine Position Statement: **Exercise and Pregnancy**, Julia Alleyne MD CCFP Dip Sports Med (CASM) Family Physician/Diploma Sport Medicine, WIISM member Director of Women's College Hospital Sport CARE Clinic, Toronto, Ontario, (July 1998):
<http://www.casm-acms.org/documents/ExcerciseandPregnancy.pdf>
7. **PARmed-X for Pregnancy**, Physical Activity Readiness Medical Examination. PARmed-X for Pregnancy is a guideline for health screening prior to participation in a prenatal fitness class or other exercise. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology:
<http://www.csep.ca/communities/c574/files/hidden/pdfs/parmed-xpreg.pdf>
8. **Issues Related to Pregnancy and Athletic Participation**: The Foundation Position Women's Sports Foundation:
<http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/issues/disc/article.html?record=1145>
9. Joint SOGC / CSEP Clinical Practice Guidelines: "**Exercise in Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period**" Davies, G.A.L., Wolfe, L.A., Mottola, M.F., MacKinnon C. Can. J. Appl. Physiol. 28(3): 329-341 2003, Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology Published in the June 2003 issues of Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Canada and the Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology: <http://www.csep.ca/main.cfm?cid=574&nid=5091>
10. **Title IX Regulations 1975** provide that "A recipient shall not discriminate against any student, or exclude any student from its education program or activity, including any class or extracurricular activity, on the basis of such student's pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy or recovery there from, unless the student requests voluntarily to participate in a separate portion of the program or activity of the recipient."