

Hockey New South Wales  
**Pregnancy Policy**  
Effective – October 2007



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## **1. Background Issues**

Women are increasingly seeking to continue participation in sports, such as Hockey, throughout their pregnancy.

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

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.

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.

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".

## **2. Pregnancy Policy**

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

## **3. Policy Guidelines**

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

### **3.1. A Pregnant Player Should**

- 3.1.1.** 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;
- 3.1.2.** 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 Hockey;

- 3.1.3. Have regular antenatal reviews with her doctor, including ongoing review of her exercise participation;
- 3.1.4. Take into account her changed physical condition, use common sense and not take unnecessary risks;
- 3.1.5. Remember that the ultimate decision to participate in Hockey will always be hers, whilst having regard to all the circumstances.

### **3.2. A Sports Administrator Should**

- 3.2.1. Evaluate the precautions she/ he can take to avoid harm to all players, including pregnant players;
- 3.2.2. Develop protocols and procedures to communicate with players regarding participation in Hockey during pregnancy, including:
  - 3.2.2.1. Providing players with the opportunity to advise of their pregnancy;
  - 3.2.2.2. 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).
- 3.2.3. Be aware of Commonwealth, State and Territory anti-discrimination legislation and its application in Hockey and review the rules, regulations and constitution of her/ his team/club/ association/ member organisation with respect to the relevant anti-discrimination legislation;
- 3.2.4. 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;
- 3.2.5. Ensure that the organisation's insurance (including public liability and player injury insurance) is up to date and that it provides appropriate cover;
- 3.2.6. Promote adherence to the rules of the game;
- 3.2.7. Create a playing environment that is reasonably safe for all players.

### **3.3. A Coach Should**

- 3.3.1. 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 Hockey during pregnancy;

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- 3.3.2. Take reasonable measures to ensure that all athletes are aware of the issues related to participation in Hockey during pregnancy;
- 3.3.3. Respect and support the player's right to make her own decisions in relation to her participation or non participation in Hockey whilst pregnant;
- 3.3.4. 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.*

### 3.4. Match Officials Should

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

### 3.5. Other Players Should

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

## 4. Policy Review and Approval

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

## 5. References

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"  
New South Wales Netball Association "Pregnancy policy"  
South Australia Netball Association "Pregnancy Policy and Guidelines"

## Appendix A Pregnancy Checklist

Hockey NSW supports the position that a pregnant player should be given the opportunity to decide for herself, in consultation with her medical advisers, whether or not to participate whilst pregnant. Hockey NSW has formed this position in light of the Australian Sports Commission Pregnancy in Sport – Guidelines for the Australian Sporting Industry and on the basis of current medical evidence and legal advice as to the risks of injury and potential liability surrounding the issue.

This checklist has been developed to assist clubs and associations in dealing with the issue prior to and post notification of player pregnancy.

Prior to Notification		Yes	No
1.	Has the club or association included in player contracts, player registrations or the like an obligation on the player to notify the club or association that the player is pregnant?  For Example:  <i>"The player undertakes that upon becoming aware that she is, or is reasonably likely to be, pregnant or suffering any illness, injury or other ailment, she will notify [insert the club/association name] (as appropriate and where practicable, in writing) of the details of that regnancy, illness or injury or other ailment."</i>		
2.	Has the club or association advised players that continued participation in hockey during pregnancy poses theoretical risks to them and to their unborn child?		
3.	Has the club or association suggested that pregnant players seek advice from an appropriately qualified medical practitioner as to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the risks involved in participating in hockey while pregnant;</li> <li>• whether it is safe for them to continue participating in hockey while pregnant and, if so, for how long they should continue to participate.</li> </ul>		
4.	Has the club or association reserved the right of the club or association to request from the player evidence that she has obtained medical advice in respect of her participation whilst pregnant (note this does not refer to the substance of the medical advice as such information is confidential and subject to privacy considerations)?		
5.	Have the statements in 1 to 4 been included in the player contracts, registration forms or similar documents?		
6.	Have the statements in 1 to 4 been displayed in a prominent place where pregnant players are likely to see it?		
7.	Have appropriate indemnities and/or releases been included in the player contract, registration forms or similar documents?		
8.	Does the club or association have appropriate insurance, which extends to claims which are made by a pregnant player or her child?  If yes, is the amount of insurance appropriate?		

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<b>Post Notification</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
9.	Has the pregnant player sought advice from an appropriately qualified medical practitioner, independent to the club or association, as to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the risks involved in participating in hockey while pregnant;</li> <li>• whether it is safe for her to continue participating in hockey while pregnant and, if so, for how long she should continue to participate?</li> </ul>		
10.	Assuming the player has obtained advice from an appropriately qualified medical practitioner, has she decided to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continue to participate?</li> <li>• If so, for how long?</li> </ul>		
11.	Is the club or association aware that the pregnant player either has not obtained appropriate medical advice or is ignoring such medical advice?  If yes, has the club or association taken positive steps to protect both the mother and the unborn child, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arranging for the mother to see an appropriately qualified medical expert?</li> <li>• counselling the mother to cease competing of her own accord, or out of regard to the unborn child?</li> </ul>		