

FEMALE ATHLETE TRIAD

What is it?

The Female Athlete Triad is a syndrome of three conditions that can be at differing levels of severity.

SYMPTOMS ARE:

- ☼ ENERGY DEFICIT/
DISORDERED EATING
- ☼ MENSTRUAL DISTURBANCES/
AMENORRHEA
- ☼ BONE LOSS/OSTEOPOROSIS

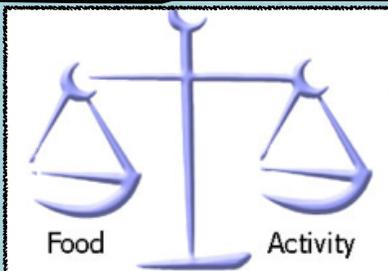
The Triad is most prevalent in females in sports that promote leanness. When you use more energy during exercise than you consume, there is an energy deficit. This can be the result of consciously restricting food intake, body image problems, or a high desire to be thin. Amenorrhea often results from disordered eating; it is the lack of a menstrual period for three months or more. If you have Female Athlete Triad, you are more likely to have low bone mass, which causes weakened bones. Osteoporosis is the severe form of weakened bones. Bone loss increases your risk for fractures.



What can you do?

Use a diary or calendar to monitor your menstrual cycle. Meet with your physician if your menstrual cycle is irregular or if you have recurrent injuries or stress fractures. If you think you may be overly concerned about your body image, talk with a counselor. Meet with a sports nutritionist or dietitian to help you create a diet

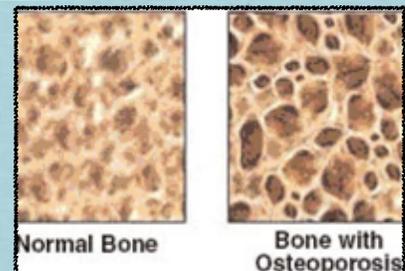
that will meet your body's energy needs for the activities you are involved in. Emotional support is important too; talk with your parents, coaches, and teammates and ask for their help and guidance. Go to femaleathletetriad.org for more information.



LOW ENERGY AVAILABILITY Remember that balance is key. If you are using a lot of calories for physical activity, you need to eat enough to fuel that activity. Disordered eating can cause hormonal imbalances that will impact your menstrual cycle and bone density.



MENSTRUAL DISTURBANCES This is often the result of an imbalance between eating and training. When the body is in an energy deficit, the level of estrogen in the body is lowered, causing menstrual irregularities.



BONE LOSS Another result of low estrogen in the body is loss of bone mass. When bones become weak, they are more likely to fracture and cause injury. During times of amenorrhea, you can lose 5% of your bone mass in a year. Bone loss can also lead to osteoporosis.