

# What You Should Know About The Female Athlete Triad

## What is the Female Athlete Triad?

The Triad is a disorder composed of three main concerns: low energy availability, menstrual irregularities, and decreased bone density. Low energy availability refers to not consuming sufficient calories for the amount of exercise and energy the body is using. Menstrual irregularities mean periods that do not occur at regular, monthly intervals. Decreased bone density is having less bone mass than would be expected for someone of your age.

## What are the risk factors for developing the Triad?

Behaviors that lead to insufficient energy intake for the degree of exercise being done are risk factors for the Triad. Such behaviors can include dieting and irregular eating habits, striving for low body weight or body fat percentage, and exercising more than what is necessary for your sport. Being involved in sports that encourage or emphasize a lean body shape, have weight classes, or focus on appearance may also contribute to unhealthy eating practices.

## What are signs of the Triad?

Symptoms may include weight loss, skipping or losing periods, and stress bone fractures or stress reactions, a precursor to stress fractures.

## What are the short- and long-term consequences of the Triad?

An immediate consequence of the syndrome includes decreased athletic performance because the body is not receiving the nutrition it needs. You may also have increased fatigue and concentration problems. In the long-term, you may be at increased risk for bone fractures or osteoporosis.

## How is the Triad diagnosed?

There is no blood test that can diagnose the Triad. Rather, your physician will ask questions about your training, diet, and menstrual cycle.

## How is the Triad treated?

The Triad is best treated with a care team including a physician, dietician, and for those with disordered eating, a mental health practitioner. Depending on your needs, recommendations about diet or exercise changes will be made with close follow-up.



## How is the Triad prevented?

To prevent the Triad, it is important to encourage consistent eating with sufficient calories to account for the amount, type, and intensity of exercise you are doing. Early intervention is also important, so if there are any changes in your menstrual cycle, contact your physician right away.

## Patient Resources

For more information, visit the following links:  
[www.femaleathletetriad.org](http://www.femaleathletetriad.org)  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)