

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE



Introduction to female health

What is the definition of a menstrual cycle?

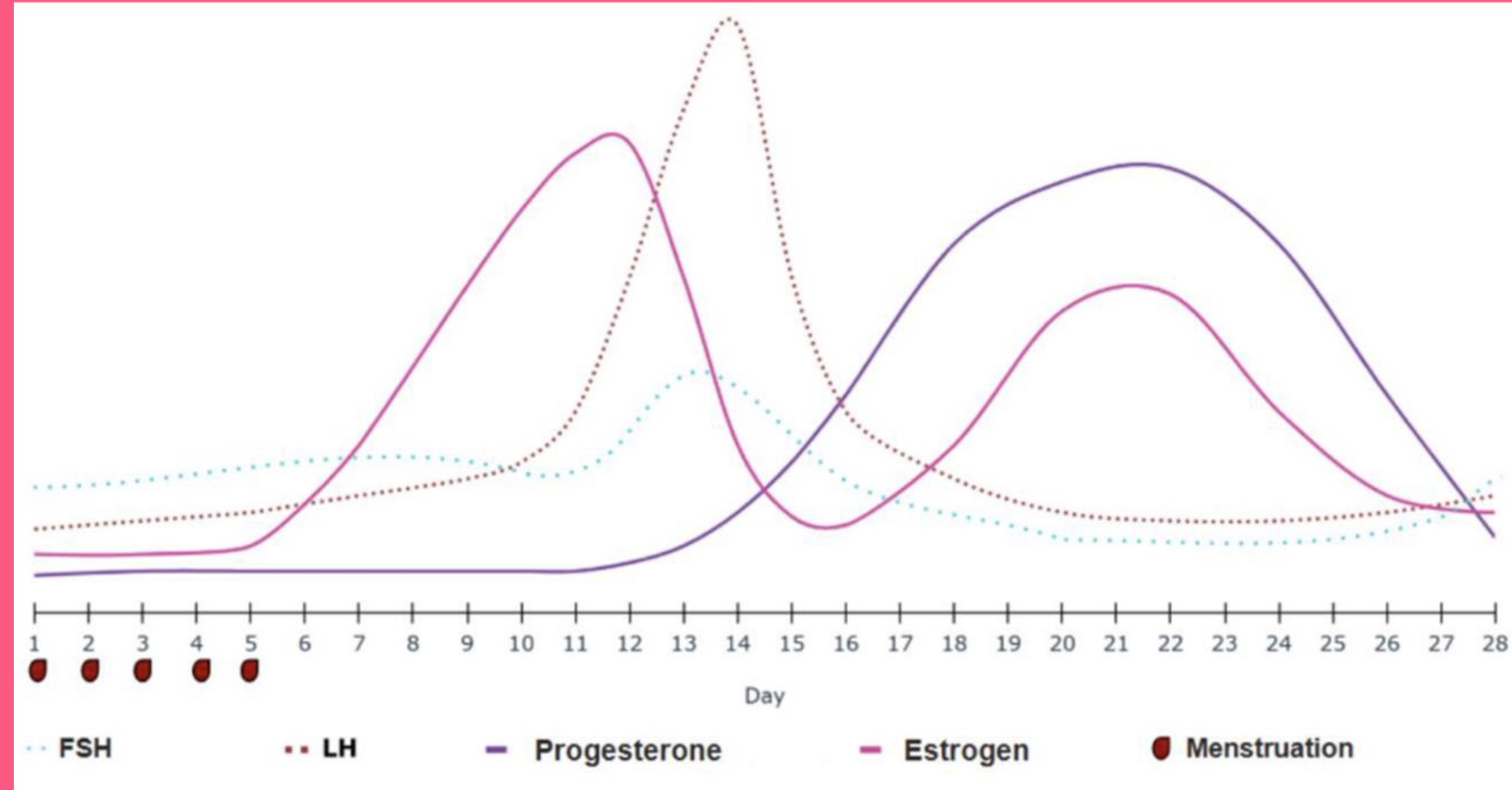
- The pattern of hormonal changes in a healthy female that occurs over approximately 28 days.

Menstruation = Days 1-5

Follicular = Days 6-11

Ovulation = Days 12-14

Luteal = Days 15-28



What is a period?

- A period is the monthly shedding of the lining of the uterus which causes bleeding from the vagina.
- It typically lasts 3–7 days and happens every month

Coping with symptoms

- Hot water bottle
- Painkillers
- Exercise can help relieve cramping
- Having a good support network
- Planning and tracking period



Follicular is first

- High energy
- Feeling fresh
- Overall mood improvements



Ovulation

- Balance and Co-ordination is worse
- Increased discharge
- High Energy levels



Luteal is last

- Tiredness
- Fatigue
- Mood-swings
- PMS
- Bloating
- Cravings
- Skin changes
- Sickness
- Upset stomach



How do you feel during your cycle? Chat to the people next to you about your own experiences.



Think about if there are any reoccurring symptoms you experience every month.



Performance as a female athlete

Speed Changes

Some weeks your nervous system fires faster.

Other weeks, the same set feels flat.

Energy Levels

In the luteal phase

Body temp + HR + Ventilation
Increase

Threshold sets feel harder

Recovery

Your ability to recover changes across the month.

Luteal phase = prioritise sleep+
nutrition

Mood Before Big Meets

Feelings of anxiety, self belief,
confidence, emotional may be worse in
luteal phase

Menstrual cycle
experiences are
different for
everyone

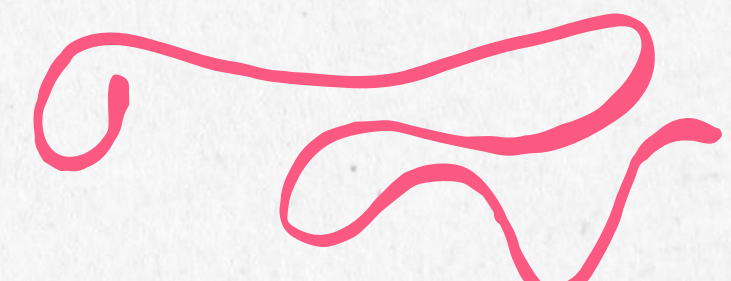



Scenario's

Swimmer A feels amazing in week 2 every month and flat in week 4. Fitness hasn't changed. What might be happening?

Swimmer B does not notice any differences in her speed or performance but her motivation is really lacking. What phase might she be in?

Swimmer C hasn't raced her best and she isn't sure why. She is feeling very upset and emotional- how can we as her freinds support her?



Elite athletes in sport

Performance athletes:

- Find ways to best manage their cycle
- They make notes of symptoms that they experience every month/ use apps - FLO
- They are aware of their physical and psychological symptoms
- They prioritise communication with their coach
- They understand when to push through and when they need to hold back depending on the severity of symptoms

Symptoms

SWIM

Mood



Want

Am I having sickness, dizziness, heavy fatigue, severe bleeding or cramping?

Can I swim today or does my body need a lighter option

What support do I need to help me best prepare for training / racing?

How can you show up for yourself despite potential mood swings

Yes

No

I'm ok to swim

I need a lighter option

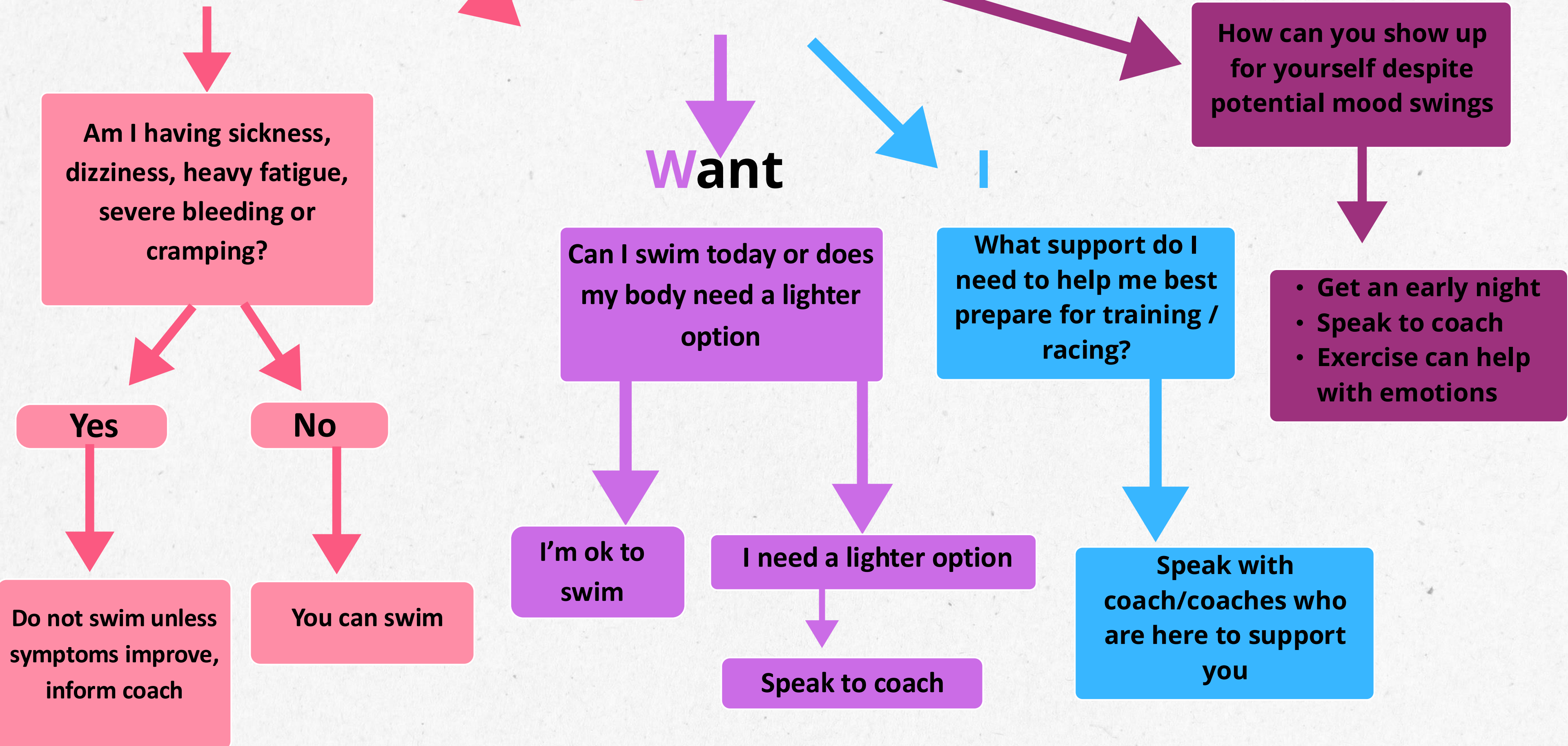
Speak with coach/coaches who are here to support you

- Get an early night
- Speak to coach
- Exercise can help with emotions

Do not swim unless symptoms improve, inform coach

You can swim

Speak to coach



Q+A

Any tips for coping during a meet?

Planning ahead and tracking your cycle can help make competitions feel more manageable.

If possible, plan around the timeline of your events. For example, if your first race starts at 11:00am, you could put in a tampon when you change into your race costume. Just make sure to give yourself a little extra time to do this.

Be kind to yourself. Positive self-talk can be really helpful, as can visualisation techniques. The night before a race, try visualising how you would like the day to go and how you want to perform.

Any suggestions on different products, e.g. tampons vs period swimwear?

This is very individual, and what works best will vary from person to person. Tampons are often a good option as they can accommodate different flow levels.

Period swimwear is generally best suited to light to moderate flows and can also be used as a backup alongside other products for heavier flows.

Most period swimwear can hold around 10–20ml of fluid, which is roughly equivalent to 1–3 tampons. Menstrual cycle cups are also a good option!

What would happen if I leaked in the pool?

While there is limited research comparing water pressure in the pool to period flow, specialists suggest that swimming could temporarily slow your period flow, due to the water pressure causing resistance to the blood flow. Don't worry, even if a small amount of blood is released into the pool, it probably won't be visible. In other words, you won't leave a bloody trail behind you. Use a menstrual cup, tampon, or period-friendly swimwear to prevent leaks. Once you leave the water, your flow should return.

What can I do to help myself if I have a stomach ache or feel sluggish?

If you have stomach cramps, exercise can sometimes help relieve them. You can also use a hot water bottle or take pain relief if appropriate.

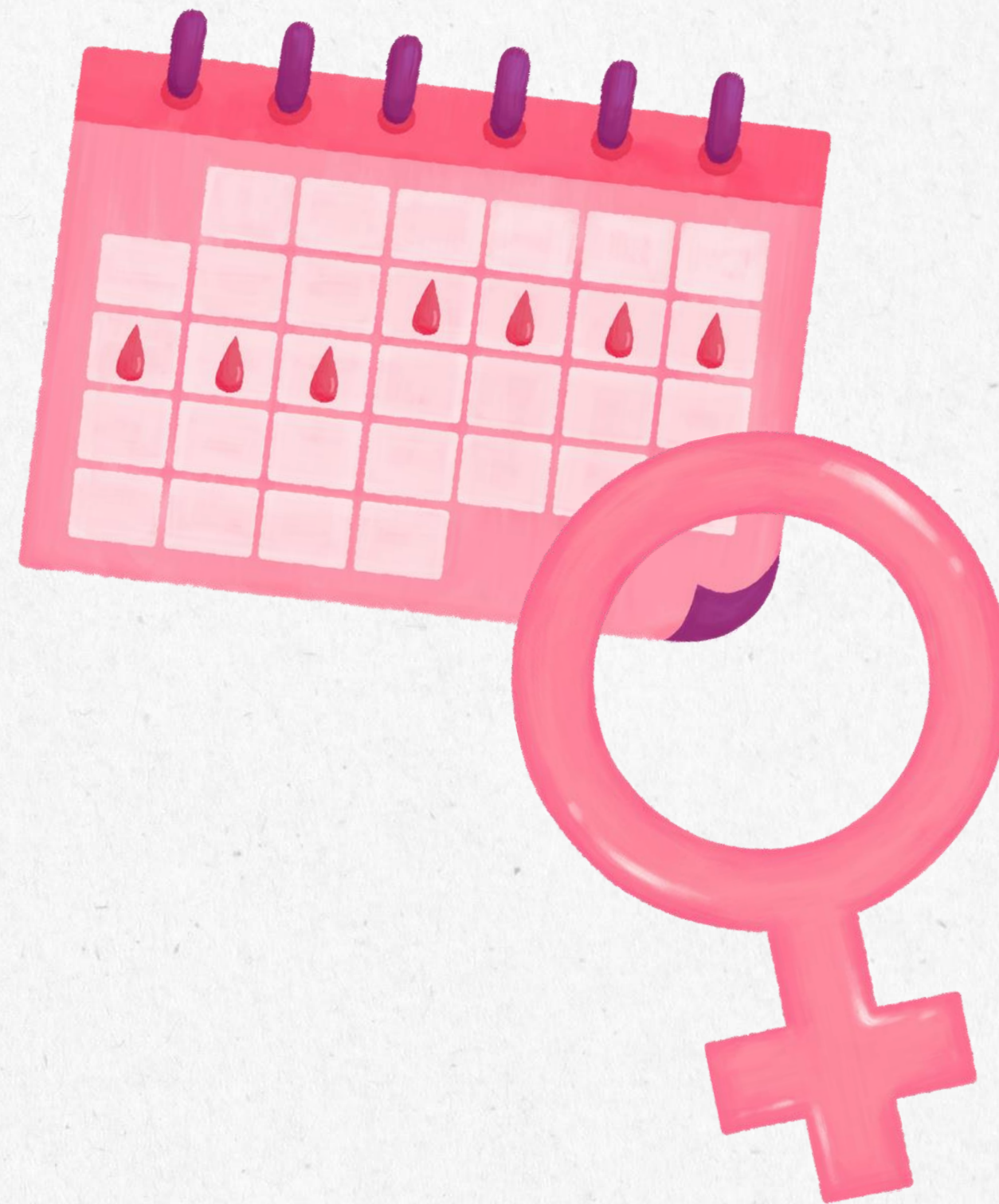
If you are feeling sluggish, understanding what works best for you can help. This might be going for a walk, getting some fresh air, having a nap, or taking some time to rest and recover.

How might periods affect my performance?

In general, research suggests that different phases of the menstrual cycle can influence how you feel and perform. Some people may experience times when they feel stronger, faster, and more energised.

Everyone's experience is different, but approaching your cycle with a positive mindset and understanding how your body responds can help you feel more confident and prepared.

**THANK YOU
VERY MUCH!**





FEMALE ATHLETE NUTRITION

DANIEL ALCOCK

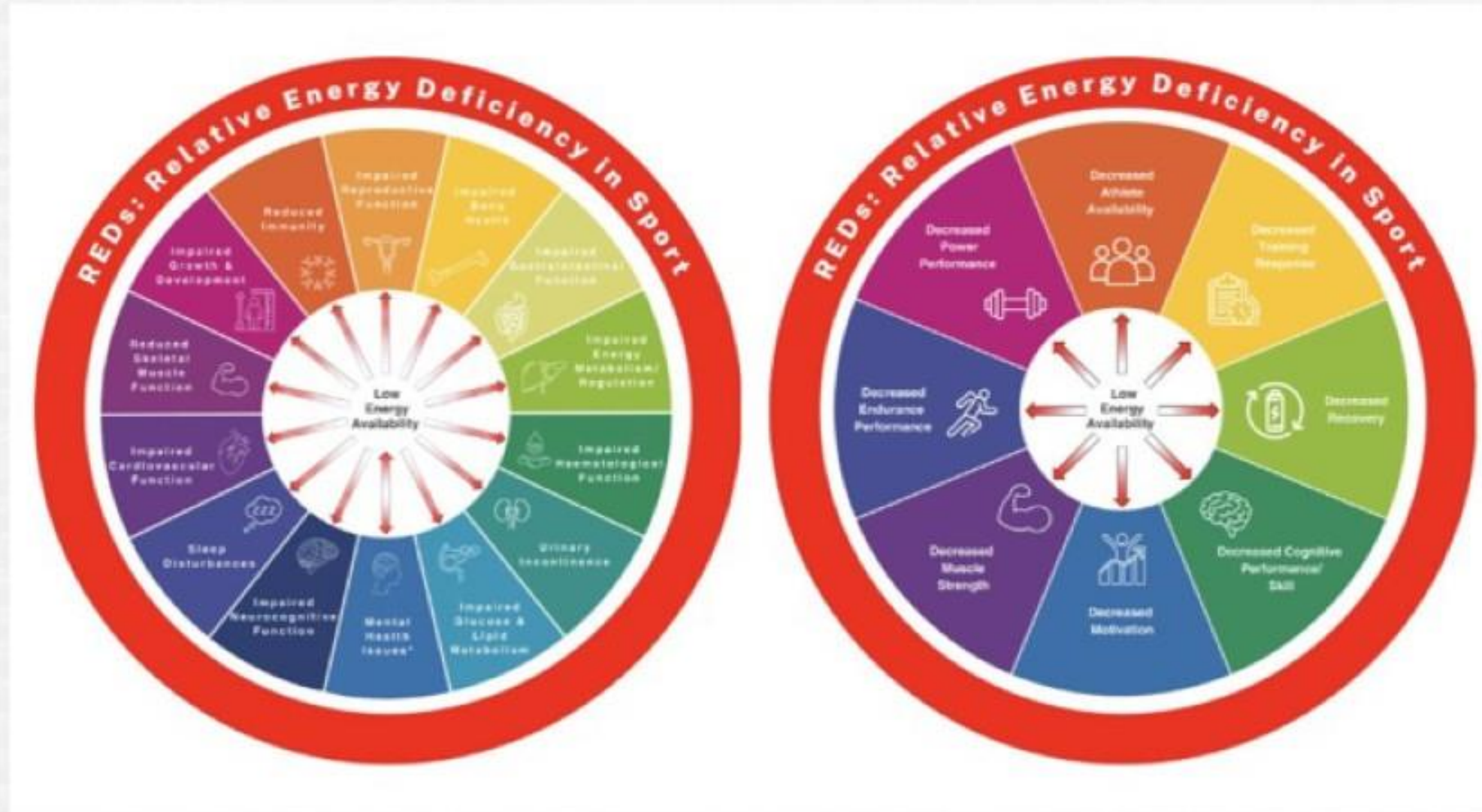


Somerset ASA

~ Founded 1902 ~

Affiliated to Swim England South West Ltd

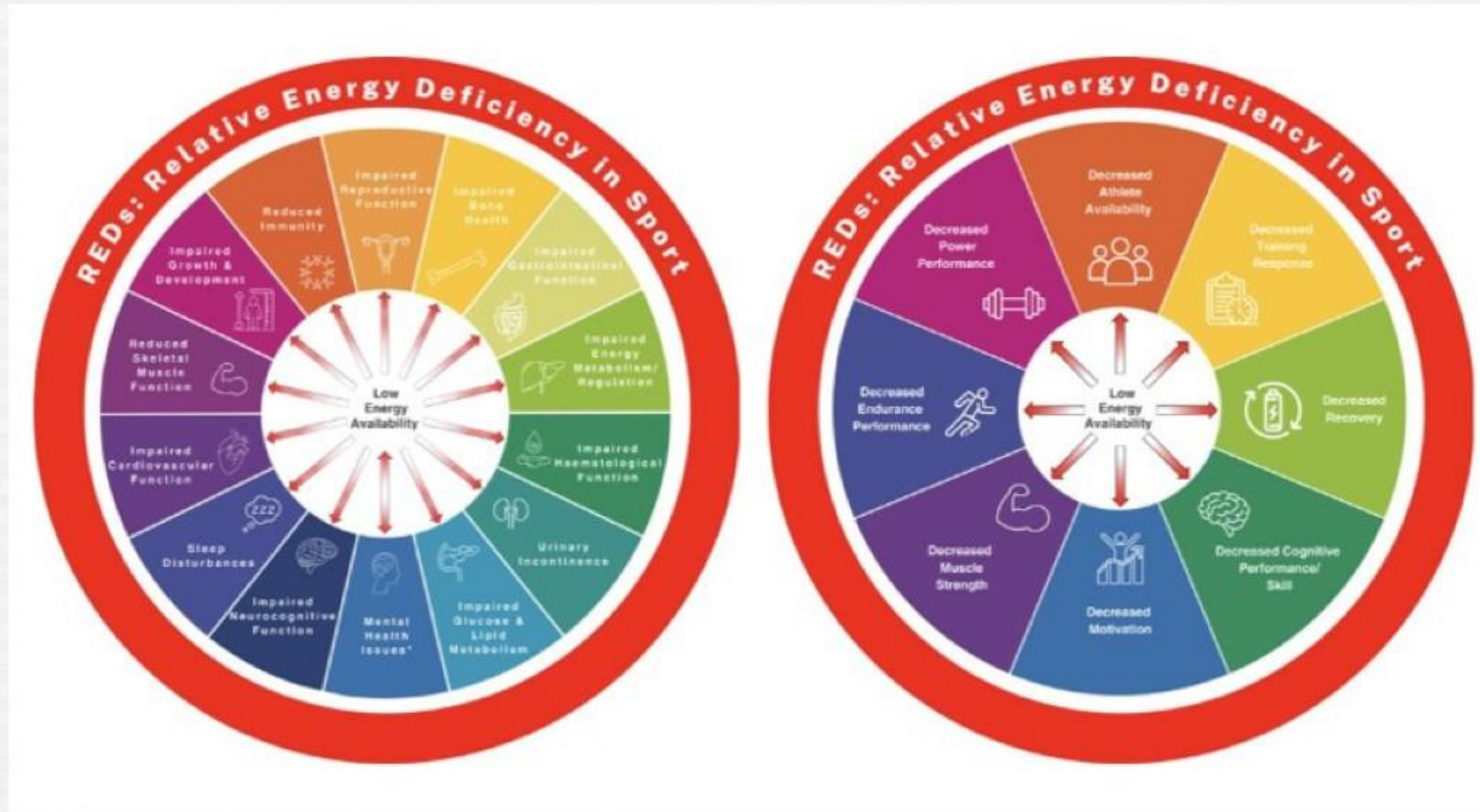
Why is nutrition important?



Statistics:

- Up to 70-80% of youth athletes exhibit symptoms of REDs
- Long term LEA = negative health & performance outcomes
- Reduced peak height, BMD, prolonged recovery, poorer mental health outcomes

Why?



Statistics:

- Swimmers are more at risk due to training load & aesthetic nature of sport
- Youth athletes are at an increased risk due to your training load & increased growth & energy demands

Training & Menstrual Cycle

Key Points:

- At the mid-point of your cycle you're more likely to be prone to injury
- Try to work out what intensity level of training is best for you at different points in your cycle
- Add vitamin C to your diet to support with repair and recovery (this can come from – Oranges, Peppers, Broccoli & Strawberries)
- You may experience fatigue, feelings of clumsiness or reduced coordination during your cycle. If you do, you can try - including carbohydrates during any training you do to see if this helps & increasing the length of your warm-up the week before and the week of your period
- Tracking your cycle can help you identify when in your cycle you are training well, recovering better or feeling stronger. It can also help you better understand where you get any symptoms within your cycle.

Conversations with Coaches Key Points:

- If you feel comfortable, let your coach know when you are coming up to or have your period so they can taper your training load. To make this conversation more comfortable, agree to have your parent there with you